

Trashing our Treasures:

Congressional Assault on the Best of America



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Introduction

National parks, forests and public lands are America's greatest natural treasures. From the towering peaks of Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado to the crystalline waters of Crater Lake in Oregon, these beautiful places truly represent the best of America. Many of these lands were set aside to safeguard natural oases and establish permanent landmarks on the national landscape.

Public lands, from national parks and forests to wilderness areas and local parks, are essential for functioning ecosystems. They support invaluable natural preserves and act as havens for diverse wildlife and plant life, including many threatened and endangered species. Wilderness areas and national forests, in particular, are crucial for watershed protection, carbon sequestration and storage, and climate regulation. Public lands are also part of our national character: they offer opportunities for people to reconnect with the outdoors, provide places for children to play and families to recreate, and can be sanctuaries for those seeking solitude in nature. As esteemed conservationist John Muir once said, "everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike."

In addition to their natural grandeur and invaluable ecological role, public lands are at the heart of a recreation industry that supports millions of jobs and generates billions of dollars of revenue every year. Public lands draw millions of visitors, both foreign and domestic, who come to participate in a wide range of activities including hiking, camping, wildlife watching, boating, biking, climbing, and skiing. National parks alone attract more than 275 million visitors every year,¹ contribute \$47 billion annually to the economy, and support 388,000 U.S. jobs.² A recent study by the Outdoor Industry Association estimates that active outdoor recreation (much of which occurs on public lands,) contributes \$646 billion to the U.S. economy annually, generates \$80 billion in annual state and national revenue, and supports 6.1 million jobs across the U.S.³ Natural areas also increase nearby property values and provide business opportunities in rural communities.

Protecting the Best of America

Despite the critical role these landscapes play in protecting water quality and ecosystems, as well as providing outdoor recreation opportunities, far too many of our public lands are under attack. Development, mining, drilling, and logging would destroy essential habitat for plants and wildlife, and ruin the experience for nature-goers. The environmental laws that protect public lands are intended to preserve treasured places for future generations and safeguard them from excessive exploitation. The Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Endangered Species Act, National Park Service Organic Act, Wilderness Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Federal Water Pollution Control Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and the Antiquities Act are just a few of the critical laws that we need to protect our waterways, air quality, and open spaces by limiting excessive development and other forms of resource exploitation on federal lands. The level of safeguards varies by land designation; the strongest protections prevent motorized vehicle access and road-building in the most sensitive wilderness and roadless areas, but all of these laws protect precious natural areas from pollution, habitat fragmentation and degradation.

Even though public lands have been protected by cornerstone environmental laws for decades, several Congressional leaders have been working to open them up to resource exploitation and development by dismantling these very protections. The following section highlights some of the most egregious attacks, which put beloved places in the country at risk of being lost forever.

Legislative Threats: A Dangerous Trend

Throughout the 112th Congress, we have seen dozens of bills introduced in the House of Representatives that seek to rollback protections for public lands. Representative Henry Waxman, who co-released a report detailing the anti-environmental track record of the current Congress, commented that “the House Republican assault on the environment has been reckless and relentless. In bill after bill, for one industry after another, the House has been voting to roll back environmental laws and endanger public health. The Republican anti-environment agenda is completely out-of-touch with what the American public wants.” The report reveals some startling numbers: in the first session, House Republicans voted 191 times to weaken environmental protections; by the end of end of 2011, there were 47 votes to weaken land and coastal protections.⁴ These votes were largely driven by powerful oil and mining industry lobbyists, large-scale developers and corporate interests. Representative Howard Berman, who released the report with Representative Waxman said, “sadly, many Republicans in the House of Representatives have shown a clear pattern of putting business interests ahead of human interest—of protecting corporate polluters over constituents.” If this trend persists, we will only continue to see bills that threaten to harm our beloved public lands.



Lake Tahoe

Michael

Threats to Wilderness and Roadless Areas (H.R. 1581, H.R. 2834, H.R. 4089)

The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness as “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain,” and that is “protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions.”⁵ For nearly five decades, this law has preserved millions of acres and protected some of our most sensitive lands from pollution, development, habitat fragmentation and erosion. Without the legal protections that come with a Wilderness designation, pristine areas and the wildlife that depend on them could be lost forever to destructive practices like drilling, mining, logging, and other



forms of resource extraction. The “Roadless Rule” protects more than 58.5 million acres of national forest land from most commercial logging and road-building, and associated mining and drilling. This protection was the result of hard-fought battle by the conservation community to protect sensitive areas under the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The following bills are a serious step backwards and represent very real attacks on the sensitive and important places they protect.

The Wilderness & Roadless Release Act (H.R. 1581) sponsored by Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), would strip these protections from roadless and wilderness study areas, where road-building is forbidden.⁶ Roadless areas are often within national forests and adjacent to national parks, enriching the beauty and grandeur of pristine areas, keeping wildlife habitat intact, and offering respite for visitors seeking solitude. This bill would eliminate the Forest Service’s Roadless rule and turn a portion of these lands over to logging. It would also prohibit the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) from implementing Secretary Salazar’s “Wild Lands” policy, which protects wilderness-quality BLM lands.⁷ Former Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt called H.R. 1581

“the most radical, overreaching attempt to dismantle the architecture of our public land laws that has been proposed in [his] lifetime.”⁸

Box #1

The House has continued its recent assault on public lands by passing H.R. 2578. This package of lands bills would privatize 90,000 acres of Tongass National Forest allowing a corporation to clearcut prime old growth in Alaska, allow motorized vehicles near turtle nesting areas in Cape Hatteras National Seashore and in wilderness areas of the Boundary Waters, and has a provision that would waive 16 cornerstone environmental and public health laws within 100 miles of the Canadian and Mexican borders – including such fundamental laws like the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Endangered Species Act. The package also incorporates a provision which would gut conservation protections associated with grazing on federal lands by granting unchecked powers to exclude the management of live-stock grazing from environmental review.

The Wilderness Development Act (H.R.2834), proposed by Representative Dan Benishek (R-MI), threatens to open up wilderness areas to development in a similar way.⁹ The bill would automatically grant an exception to the Wilderness Act's prohibitions on the use of motorized vehicles and equipment for any activity that provides opportunities to hunt, fish, or shoot.¹⁰ This could involve allowing all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, motorbikes, motorboats, chainsaws, and other motorized vehicles and equipment onto pristine wilderness lands.¹¹ Opening isolated wilderness regions to such destructive activities and the associated pollution would harm both the environment and backcountry recreation in these areas.

Box #2

H.R. 4089, the so-called "Sportsmen's Heritage Act," offered by Representative Jeff Miller (R-FL), is a revised version of H.R. 2834 that passed the House in April. The representatives offering this bill have disguised an attack on our treasured places as a bill to create more hunting and fishing opportunities. In actuality, this bill could rollback crucial environmental protections and damage lands valued by conservationists and sportsmen alike. Like H.R. 2834, it would overturn decades of Congressional protections for wilderness areas and change the Wilderness Act to allow wide-spread motorized access, as well as permit new logging, mining and fossil fuel extraction. Additionally, this bill would exempt important land management decisions from environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act. The bill also includes language enabling the management agencies to close areas to hunting and fishing in favor of energy development, without notice to the public. H.R. 4089 would have implications on wildlife refuges, national forests and BLM land as well—more than 600 million acres in all. Finally, this legislation takes away the president's ability to quickly designate national monuments and protect national treasures at risk.

Other threats to public lands (HR 1126, HR 2588, HR 2852)

There several bills that demonstrate many legislators' outright disregard for preserving public lands.¹² One of these is the Disposal of Federal Lands Act (H.R.1126), proposed by Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT), that would force the Bureau of Land Management in Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming to sell off "excess" public lands to the highest bidder.¹³ The Wilderness Society estimates that this would result in the sale of 3.3 million acres that could then be used for logging, mining, and other forms of resource exploitation.¹⁴ Another similar bill is the American Land Sales Act (H.R.2588), sponsored by Rep. Ted Poe (R-TX), which would force BLM and the Forest Service to sell 8% of their respective federal land to the highest bidder, annually until 2016. This year alone, the two agencies would be forced to sell off nearly 36 million acres of forest and public land to corporate interests.¹⁵ Furthermore, the Land Division Act (H.R.2852), sponsored by Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT), bill would force the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service to give away, free of charge, 5% of their lands to each Western state. This would leave 30 million acres in the west vulnerable to resource extraction and development.¹⁶

Matt Santomaro

Threats to Public Lands in Border States (H.R. 1505)

One of the first bills to threaten public lands this Congress was the so-called National Security & Federal Lands Protection Act (H.R.1505), sponsored by Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT). If passed, H.R. 1505 would exempt Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Border Patrol from 36 environmental laws within 100 miles of the Canadian and Mexican borders.¹⁷ Since the bill would waive the National Environmental Policy Act, among others, DHS could build roads and fences, implement vehicle patrols, allow fly-overs, and erect towers and checkpoint stations on all federal lands- including national parks, without any notice to the public. Not only could these activities pollute and disrupt sensitive ecosystems, but motorized vehicles, road-building and construction would degrade and fragment habitat, lead to soil erosion and could pollute nearby waterways.¹⁸ Finally, this bill would allow DHS to close off recreation areas to visitors and sportsmen, without being held accountable. Representative John Garamendi (D-CA) summed up his views on the House floor with these words “[this bill is] the epitome of stupidity.”¹⁹ His statement is perhaps best supported by a recent General Accounting Office report that concluded that current

federal laws do not currently impede border protection.²⁰ Other detractors of the bill include Department of Homeland Security itself, which testified before Congress that it deems its current jurisdiction adequate. This bill is a serious threat to public lands in border regions, such as Glacier National Park in Montana, the Boundary Waters in Minnesota, and even Allegheny National Forest in Pennsylvania. An amended version of this bill passed the House in June (see Box #1.)



Maroon Bells

Our public lands are irreplaceable. All of the bills chronicled in this report would override existing environmental protections and could result in the disastrous exploitation of protected lands. If the co-sponsors of these bills have their way, cornerstone public lands protections that have safeguarded invaluable ecosystems for decades will be undone, and the recreation industries that depend on these natural settings will suffer. Pending legislation poses significant risks to our public lands, and demonstrates the skewed priorities of far too many members of the 112th Congress. The following sections outline some of the ways these bills could damage specific treasured places across the country.

CALIFORNIA

Yosemite National Park



Chensiyuan

California exhibits an incredible diversity of landscapes and ecosystems, from the temperate north to the arid south, and boasts nearly 15 million acres of untrammelled wilderness. This variety of climates ensures a wide representation of flora and fauna, such as the breathtaking giant sequoias. In particular, Yosemite National Park and Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Park capture the beauty and richness of California's treasured lands.

What's at Stake: Yosemite National Park

Yosemite National Park is best known for its spectacular waterfalls, which cascade over its cliffs down to deep valleys. Within its 747,956 acres there are also sweeping meadows and ancient giant sequoias. This spectacular setting is nearly 95 percent wilderness, with 704,624 acres set aside by Congress to remain untouched by human development.²¹

The topography of Yosemite is one of its most dramatic features.

There are enormous granite mountains like the 8,842-foot Half Dome and the 13,114-foot Mt. Lyell, whose steep slopes are home to the largest glacier in Yosemite, the Lyell Glacier. The 2,425-foot Yosemite Falls is the tallest waterfall in North America, flowing down into the valley's meadows.²² Yosemite Valley, approximately 3,000 feet deep and less than a mile wide, is also known for its unusual rock formations. Vegetation changes over the varying elevations from oak woodlands to chaparral scrublands at the lower levels to alpine groves higher up. There are three groves of Giant Sequoia trees, which are considered to be the most massive living thing on earth and can live for 1,000 to 3,000 years.²³ This landscape hosts tree species such as the California Black Oak, Ponderosa Pine and flowers like the Mariposa Lily and Shooting Star. The park is also home to more



Inklem

than 400 species, including peregrine falcon, golden eagle, bighorn sheep, black bear, mule deer, coyote, great-grey owl, and rainbow trout. This unique park was designated a World Heritage Site in 1984, meaning that it is deemed to be a site of invaluable cultural and natural heritage.²⁴



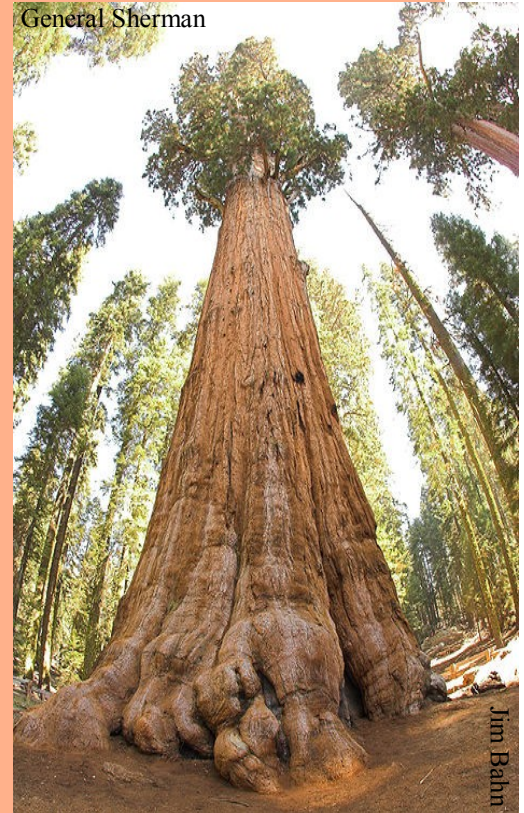
NPS

Yosemite National Park

What's at Stake: Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks

California's natural beauty is also showcased in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, two adjacent parks in the southern Sierra Nevada that together span 865,964 acres. These regions demonstrate enormous diversity—looming mountains, rugged foothills, deep canyons, vast caverns, and the world's largest trees. 96.85% of the parks, or 838,000 acres, is designated wilderness.²⁵

The parks include the 14,491 foot Mount Whitney, which is the highest mountain in the lower 48 states. There are also eleven other peaks that rise above 14,000 feet along the eastern boundary, and their snow-covered peaks provide a stark comparison to the hot, dry lowlands along the western boundary. The canyons of Kings River are some of the deepest in North America at 8000 feet in some places, deeper even than the Grand Canyon.²⁶ Even further below the surface are more than 200 marble caverns that are home to species far different from those on the surface. There are 260 native vertebrate species in the parks including the gray fox, bobcat, skunk, black bear, mule deer, mountain lion, California quail, scrub jay, gopher snake, and California king snake. Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep inhabit the high elevations where survival is difficult for most other animals.²⁷ There are also 1,530 species of plants including the mixed forests of ponderosa pine, incense-cedar, white fir, and sugar pine, as well as quaking aspen around the meadows and on the cool slopes.²⁸ True to its name, the parks also boast scattered groves of giant sequoia; the largest one in the world- General Sherman, towers over the forest at 275 feet.²⁹



By the Numbers

California's national parks, forests and public lands are not only beautiful natural settings but support a thriving tourism industry. In 2010 Yosemite received 4,047,880 visitors,³⁰ who came from all over the world to see the landscape and enjoy activities like camping, rock climbing, biking, horseback riding, rafting, skiing, fishing, and swimming. There are 800 miles of hiking trails and 1,504 campground sites for people who want to enjoy the beauty and solitude of the forest. Early lodging establishments, like the Wawona Hotel, offer a glimpse into the past for today's visitors.³¹ Yosemite National Park supports 4,597 jobs in the area and generates \$130 million in labor income.³² Total visitor spending in 2009 within 50 miles of the park was \$352 million including \$166 million spent inside the park alone.³³

Sequoia & Kings Canyon welcomed 1,610,989 visitors in 2010, many of whom came to experience the caves, hike, backpack, camp, horseback ride, rock climb, ski, and snowshoe.³⁴ There are 842.4 miles of trails along which visitors can marvel at the magnificent sequoias, as well as the other beautiful natural vistas. The parks also protect 265 Native American archeological sites and 69 historic sites from 16th century and early 17th century, when the Spanish began exploring the edge of the Sierras.³⁵ These sites attract tourists who wish to experience the rich history of the region. Recreation supports 1,243 jobs in the area, which generates \$22.3 million in direct personal income for local residents, making tourism to these parks a crucial economic factor in the region.³⁶

Legislative Threats

One bill that threatens both Yosemite and Sequoia-Kings National Parks is the Wilderness Development Act (H.R.2834), proposed by Rep. Dan Benishek (R-MI) and cosponsored by Reps. Tom McClintock (R-CA), and Ken Calvert (R-CA). This bill could allow road building on the 1,542,624 combined acres of wilderness in these parks, and other destructive activities like logging and mining. The ecosystems that thrive in both parks and the visitors that come to enjoy the unique isolation of these natural settings would be jeopardized by pollution, noise, erosion and habitat fragmentation. The balance of plant and animal life that thrives over the diverse topography should be protected rather than exploited, and it would be impossible to reclaim the wonderful serenity of these regions if cars, asphalt, and chainsaws were introduced.

Another bill that could damage the wilderness areas in Yosemite and Sequoia-Kings National Parks is the Roadless Release Act (H.R. 1581), proposed by Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) and cosponsored by Reps. Ken Calvert (R-CA), Jeff Denham (R-CA), Elton Gallegly (R-CA), Walter Herger (R-CA), Duncan Hunter (R-CA), Jerry Lewis (R-CA), Tom McClintock (R-CA), Howard McKeon (R-CA), Devin Nunes (R-CA), and Daniel Lungren (R-CA). Similar to the Wilderness Development Act, this bill could open millions of acres of wilderness to development, road building, motorized vehicles, and logging. This bill could circumvent existing environmental protections to allow the intrusion of roads, motorized vehicles, and logging in tracts of nature that have been set aside by Congress. Resource exploitation and human intrusion would disrupt the secluded environment that ecosystems depend on for survival and visitors value for recreation.

Finally, the Land Division Act (H.R.2852), proposed by Representative Rob Bishop (R-UT) and cosponsored by Reps. John Campbell (R-CA), Walter Herger (R-CA), and Duncan Hunter (R-CA), would require the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service to give away 5% of their public land in each Western state, including California, free of charge. These lands harbor irreplaceable environmental, recreational, wildlife, and other natural resources that must not be opened to new development. It would be disastrous to hand them over to development or exploitation. Development could pollute the lakes and damage the forests and wildlife, and the people who run recreation services in the dismantled areas could lose their livelihoods. This pending legislation poses significant risks for the public lands of California.



COLORADO

San Juan National Forest



Colorado is known for its majestic mountains and vast wilderness areas. The state is blessed with dense forests, snowcapped peaks, and open meadows stretching across the landscape. Colorado is home to large species that depend on the broad expanses of wilderness, such as grizzly bears, wolverines, lynx, and wolves. Elk, mule deer, beaver, porcupines, and foxes, as well as countless bird and fish species can be found in these areas as well.³⁷

What's at Stake: Weminuche Wilderness, Rocky Mountain National Park, Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness, and Lost Creek Wilderness

Weminuche, the largest wilderness in Colorado extending 488,210 acres, spans the continental divide and lies nestled in both San Juan National Forest on the west and the Rio Grande National Forest on the east.³⁸ This magnificent landscape contains a significant portion of the rugged San Juan Mountains, which tower over the surrounding plateaus, glacial valleys, and surging rivers. Part of this range, the Needle Mountains in the western end of the wilderness, contains three 14,000-foot peaks: Eolus, Sunlight and Wisdom, born of prehistoric volcanic activity.³⁹ These mountains contain the headwaters that feed the Rio Grande and San Juan rivers. In the east the terrain is gentler, with open meadows teeming with wildflowers.⁴⁰



Rocky Mountain National Park is known for its wildflowers, which cover fields where an incredible number of butterflies thrive.⁴¹ The 249,339 acres of wilderness in this park showcase the famous mountains it is named for, and support the headwaters of 150 lakes and 450 miles of streams.⁴² Below the snowcapped peaks are deep canyons carved by glaciers and covered by swaths of dense forest.

Within the Elk Mountains of central Colorado, the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness is the most photographed scene in Colorado: Maroon Bells mountain peaks reflected in the shimmering alpine Maroon Lake.⁴³ This 181,535 acre wilderness contains dark forests of spruce and fir covering glacial valleys, aspen groves, and its own array of wildflowers, as well as hot springs at Conundrum Creek.⁴⁴

The glacial formations that characterize the other wilderness areas are most strikingly displayed in the 119,790 acres of Lost Creek Wilderness in central Colorado's Pike National Forest.⁴⁵ This area is known for its unusually shaped rock formations, originally deposited by glaciers and shaped by centuries of wind and rain. The towers and spires of the Kenosha and Platte River Mountains rise over uneven plateaus with countless granite domes and half-domes, knobs, and buttresses. These rocks at times obscure Lost Creek, forcing it underground and giving it its name. Bighorn sheep enjoy the rugged terrain, and flourish among other fauna found in vast stretches of forest.⁴⁶

By the Numbers

These wilderness areas share more than gorgeous vistas and abundant wildlife; they are also major economic engines for the state. Recreation in Colorado generates \$10 billion a year⁴⁷ and creates 107,000 jobs for the 1.6 million Coloradoans alone who participate in wildlife recreation.⁴⁸ People flock to these locations to hike and backpack along hundreds of miles of trails, to raft, kayak and fish along the rivers, to snowshoe and cross country ski in the winter, and to climb, camp, ride horses and spot wildlife year round.

Weimunche is the most visited wilderness area in the state, which infuses the nearby town of Durango with nearly 2,650 jobs and \$221.6 million in tourism related revenue.⁴⁹ One of the major attractions here is the Durango-Silverton railroad, which has been running for 128 years. It winds around the western border of the wilderness, providing spectacular views of the Animas River, and climbs the steep walls of the narrow Cascade Canyon.⁵⁰

The same is true in Rocky Mountain National Park, which draws more than three million visitors a year.⁵¹ Many visitors drive along Trail Ridge Road, which traverses the park from east to west near the wilderness areas, and is one of the highest roads in North America. There is also a rich history here, with traces of ancient trails from Native American settlements and original routes and roads from early homesteads and lodges.⁵²

Maroon Bells- Snowmass Wilderness draw mountaineers by the thousands every year, as well as hikers who traverse the 16 miles of Snowmass Creek Trail to Maroon Lake or the other 100 miles of trails in the wilderness.⁵³ Tourism supported nearly 4,190 jobs in Snowmass Village in 2010, which brought in \$578,600,000 to the town.⁵⁴

Lost Creek Wilderness brings nearby Denver similar benefits. Nature lovers take a break from the city to navigate the 100 miles of trails winding through this rocky landscape. They contribute significantly to the 28,140 tourism jobs in Denver as well as to Denver's tourism industry which brings in nearly \$5 million a year.⁵⁵ All these wilderness areas attract people who wish to experience the extraordinary solitude, and tourism is immensely beneficial to Colorado's economy.



Legislative Threats

Colorado is a state known for its natural beauty. Many of Colorado's lands are protected from oil & gas drilling, industrial mining, and logging in order to preserve the state treasures for our generation and generations to come. Unfortunately bills moving through Congress threaten to open these beautiful landscapes to energy development and other forms of destruction.

One bill that threatens Colorado's wilderness areas is the Wilderness Development Act (H.R.2834), proposed by Rep. Dan Benishek (R-MI) and cosponsored by Rep. Mike Coffman (R-CO). This bill could allow road building, truck traffic and potentially even energy development in the most sensitive and pristine areas of the state. The plants and animals in wilderness areas, particularly the large wild animals the state is known for, need expansive tracts of land in order to survive. Roads could tear through these landscapes, degrade forests and threaten wildlife. Runoff from roads and soil erosion pollutes lakes and streams, and emissions from trucks would contaminate the air. On top of damaging the environment, the recreation industry supported by wilderness areas would certainly suffer.

Another bill that would damage Colorado's beautiful wilderness and roadless areas is H.R. 1581, proposed by Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) and cosponsored by Reps. Mike Coffman (R-CO), Scott Tipton (R-CO), and Doug Lamborn (R-CO), which could open 3,700,148 acres of wilderness to development.⁵⁶ Colorado's wilderness areas were set aside to remain pristine and untouched, allowing ecosystems to thrive and people to enjoy the secluded environment. Like the Wilderness Development Act, this bill would circumvent existing environmental protections and allow the intrusion of roads, motorized vehicles, and logging in wilderness areas. This could dramatically disrupt plant and animal life—once damaged, these tracts of wilderness might never recover.

Finally, the Disposal of Federal Lands Act (H.R.1126), by Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT) would require the Bureau of Land Management to sell off "excess" public lands to the highest bidder. Within enough pressure from the oil and gas industry or other developers, Colorado's unspoiled natural settings could be degraded and even lost forever. In a state where people understand the value of wilderness, public lands and clean water, oil and gas drilling and development could contaminate drinking water, pollute the air, destroy forests and threaten public health.



MINNESOTA



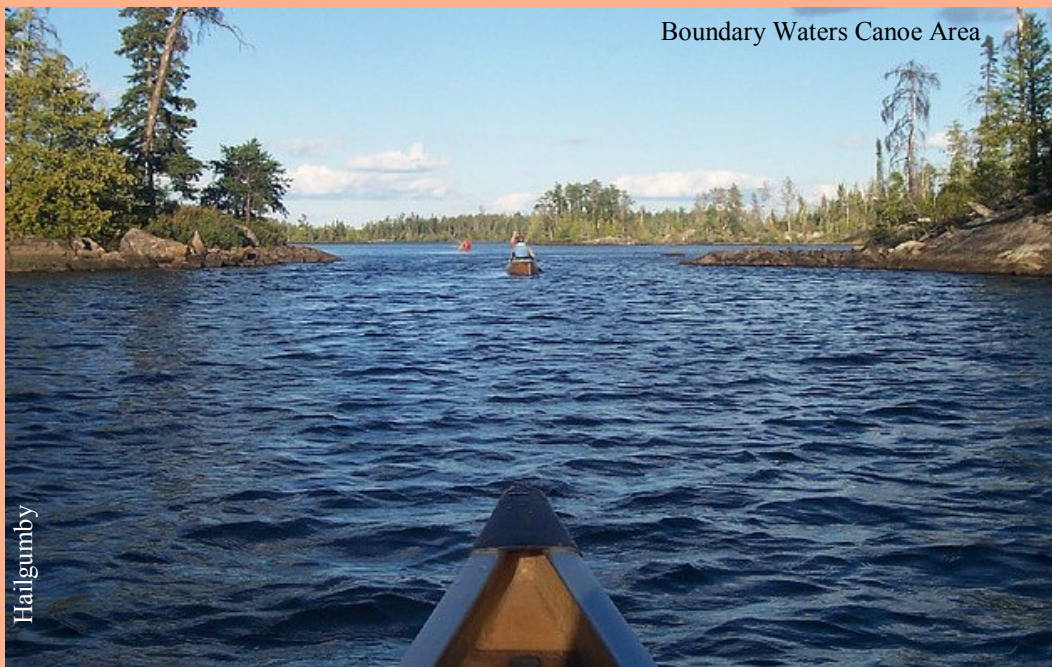
Ed Lombard

Voyageurs National Park

In northern Minnesota, the spectacular Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness dominates the landscape. Surrounded by millions of acres of forests, rivers and streams, this vast network of lakes and pristine wilderness is state gem and a priceless national treasure.

What's at Stake: The Boundary Waters and Superior National Forest

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is a rugged, dramatic, 1.1 million acre terrain—a mix of lowland bog and rocky pine uplands, crisscrossed by a series of interconnected lakes, rivers, and waterfalls.⁵⁷ The lush forests surround craters, cliffs, and sandy beaches carved thousands of years ago by glaciers. The Boundary Waters are nestled within Superior National Forest, a 3 million acre forest with almost 500,000 acres of lakes and rivers.⁵⁸ Voyageurs National Park, adjacent to the Boundary Waters, is dominated by 30 interconnected lakes within the national forest's 218,054 acres.⁵⁹ Vast forest and fresh water landscapes support a thriving and diverse array of plants and animals—including more than 225 species of birds such as the boreal chickadee, northern hawk owl, bald eagle, osprey, and loon, numerous fish like walleyes, northern pike, and smallmouth bass, and mammals including wolves, moose, beavers, bears, deer, and bobcats. The dense forests themselves are composed of pine, birch, balsam fir, spruce, and white cedar, as well as wild blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries.⁶⁰



By the Numbers

In addition to being a natural treasure, the Boundary Waters and Superior National Forest are significant economic drivers in Minnesota. Superior National Forest draws over 2.1 million annual visitors who come to experience the solitude and grandeur of the North Woods generating \$87,257,000 in annual revenue.⁶¹ The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is one of Minnesota's top tourist attractions, drawing 180,000 visitors each year who come to experience the 1,200 miles of canoe routes, dozens of hiking trails, and 2,000 campsites.⁶² Many visitors seek the services of outfitters and guides, who assist with boating, hiking, snowshoeing, and skiing. Others come to enjoy the isolation and beauty of a natural setting away from motors, electricity, telephone lines and roads. Historical sites interspersed throughout the forests, such as the hundreds of prehistoric Native American pictographs on rock ledges and cliffs,⁶³ and sites related to 17th century settlers, also attract visitors.⁶⁴



Legislative Threats

The Boundary Waters, Minnesota's pristine wilderness area, is also a national treasure. In 1978 the Boundary Waters area was established as a protected wilderness—but that is not enough to keep it safe from new threats. The following bills would open up Minnesota's gems to destructive road building, truck traffic and pave the way for sulfide mining, a dangerous type of mining that has left a toxic legacy across other western states.

One bill in Congress that threatens to damage the Boundary Waters territory is the Wilderness and Roadless Area Release Act (H.R. 1581), proposed by Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) and cosponsored by Rep. John Kline (R-MN). Much of Superior National Forest and the Boundary Waters are set aside to remain permanently unspoiled, but this bill circumvents the environmental protections and could make it possible for roads to be built in pristine areas. Cutting down trees and introducing truck traffic could destroy forest ecosystems, pollute the lakes, and have disastrous for the recreation industry.

More Legislative Threats

Another bill that threatens the Boundary Waters is the Wilderness Development Act (H.R.2834), proposed by Rep. Dan Benishek (R-MI) and cosponsored by Reps. Chip Cravaack (R-MN) and John Kline (R-MN). This bill would also allow road building, motorized vehicle use, and logging, and potentially even energy development. Like the Roadless Release Act, the bill targets the most pristine parts of Superior National Forest, which have been set aside by Congress to remain as untouched natural areas. Mining and other types of resource extraction and development would pollute the pristine waterways, and damage forests and wildlife, under the guise of promoting fishing and hunting opportunities.

The so-called Conservation & Economic Growth Act (H.R. 2578), proposed by Rep. Jeff Denham (R-CA) would allow motorized vehicles in portions of Superior National Forest and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, and waive 16 cornerstone environmental and public health laws within 100 miles of the Canadian border. It includes a revised version of H.R. 1505, proposed by Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) and co-sponsored by Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-MN), which would allow Department of Homeland Security and Border Patrol to build roads, fences, and towers, and close fishing and hunting areas within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, without any notice to the public.



Box #3

Out-of-state mining companies are pushing to conduct toxic sulfide mining or copper-nickel mining right outside of the Boundary Waters and along waterways leading to Lake Superior. Toxic mine drainage from this type of mining can leach sulfuric acid into waterways, increase mercury pollution, turn water extremely acidic, jeopardize drinking water sources, kill fish and other wildlife, and destroy the habitat they depend on. There are several bills in Congress that could make it easier for mining companies to get mining permits in Minnesota:

- ♦ The National Strategic and Critical Minerals Production Act of 2012 (H.R. 4402) that passed the House in July, strips away key protections federal lands by expediting mining exploration and permitting while limiting opportunities for citizen involvement in communities affected by mining.⁶⁵
- ♦ The Minnesota Education Investment and Employment Act (H.R. 5544), introduced by Rep. Chip Cravaack (R-MN), mandates the transfer of tens of thousands of acres of protected national forest lands into state management for logging, mining, and other activities. This would result in the loss of important protections, including the *Weeks Act* prohibition against strip mining and National Environmental Policy Act review and appeal process.⁶⁶

MONTANA

St. Mary Lake

Ken Thomas



Glacier National Park, one of the country's greatest natural treasures, is named for its jagged terrain that was carved by glaciers 10,000 years ago. Receding ice and shifting rock over thousands of years serve as a record of geologic history and there are still remnants of these glaciers throughout the landscape.⁶⁷ The park is invaluable to the state, and emblematic of all of Montana's natural beauty.

What's at Stake: Glacier National Park

On top of its rich geologic history, the park and surrounding wilderness areas are home to a rich diversity of forests, alpine meadows, and 131 named lakes with crystal clear water. The park is more than 1 million acres, 93 percent of which has wilderness characteristics.⁶⁸ Within this spectacular setting there are more than 1,000 different species of plants which vary over the terrain with different elevations and levels of rainfall. In the east, dry winds chisel trees along the high ridges while calmer conditions surround the aspen groves below. The dark, ancient cedar and hemlock forests in the west are dramatically different from the more open forests, glades and grasslands on the east side.⁶⁹ Hundreds of species of animals reside in this landscape, including more than 60 species of mammals and 260 species of birds. These include rare and endangered species such as bald eagles, grizzly bears, mountain lions and wolverines.⁷⁰ Glacier was named a World Heritage Site in 1995.⁷¹



Dave Grickson/FWS

By the Numbers

Glacier National Park is important for a vibrant state economy as well. Outdoor-related tourism supported 34,210 jobs in 2010 and visitors spent a total of \$2.5 billion on things like outfitters, guides, licenses, and campgrounds.⁷² Glacier National Park attracted 2.2 million visitors in 2010, with 45% of visitors counting it as their primary destination in the state.⁷³ Visitors participate in activities such as backpacking, camping, hiking, snowshoeing, and skiing on more than 700 miles of trails.⁷⁴ Fly fishing is popular as well. Scientists and students come to the area to research the unique and isolated landscape, and many visitors are drawn to the park to learn about Native American history.⁷⁵



Legislative Threats

Glacier's more than 1 million acres of forests, alpine meadows and crystal clear lakes are truly magnificent. The Flathead River flowing through the park boasts some of the cleanest, most pristine water in the world. Bills moving through Congress would allow roadbuilding and logging within and adjacent to the park, and could pave the way for energy development. Oil and gas drilling and other harmful resource extraction would pollute the Flathead watershed, harming wildlife inside and outside the park and damaging the recreation industries that rely on the river.

One bill moving through Congress that threatens to harm these landmarks is the Wilderness Development Act (H.R.2834), proposed by Representative Dan Benishek (R-MI) - and cosponsored by Rep. Dennis Rehberg (R-MT). This bill adds loopholes to the Wilderness Act to allow motorized vehicles, logging, and road building. Like the Roadless Release Act, this bill targets sensitive wilderness areas, like the Bob Marshall wilderness complex, which have been set aside by Congress to remain untouched.

More Legislative Threats

Another dangerous bill is the Wilderness & Roadless Release Act of 2011 (H.R.1581), proposed by Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) and cosponsored by Rep. Dennis Rehberg (R-MT), which could open areas with wilderness characteristics—or more than 90% of Glacier—to energy development and other forms of resource exploitation. Wilderness study areas in the park are some of the last untouched forests in Montana. They support ecosystems while providing visitors a true sense of solitude. Drilling, road building, logging and excessive development in wild places around Glacier National Park could destroy the natural environment, putting the pristine waters in the Flathead River valley at risk of pollution and runoff, mar the impeccable vistas and degrade essential habitat for threatened species like grizzlies and bald eagles.

Finally, the so-called Conservation & Economic Growth Act (H.R. 2578), proposed by Rep. Jeff Denham (R-CA), waives 16 cornerstone environmental and public health laws within 100 miles of Montana's Canadian border and guts conservation protections associated with grazing on federal lands. It includes a provision based on H.R.1505, which was proposed by Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) and cosponsored by Rep. Dennis Rehberg (R-MT), giving Department of Homeland Security and Border Patrol unchecked authority to build structures, drive vehicles and close fishing and hunting grounds on public lands without any notice to the public.



NPS

Two Medicine Lake

NEVADA

Prometheus Wheeler

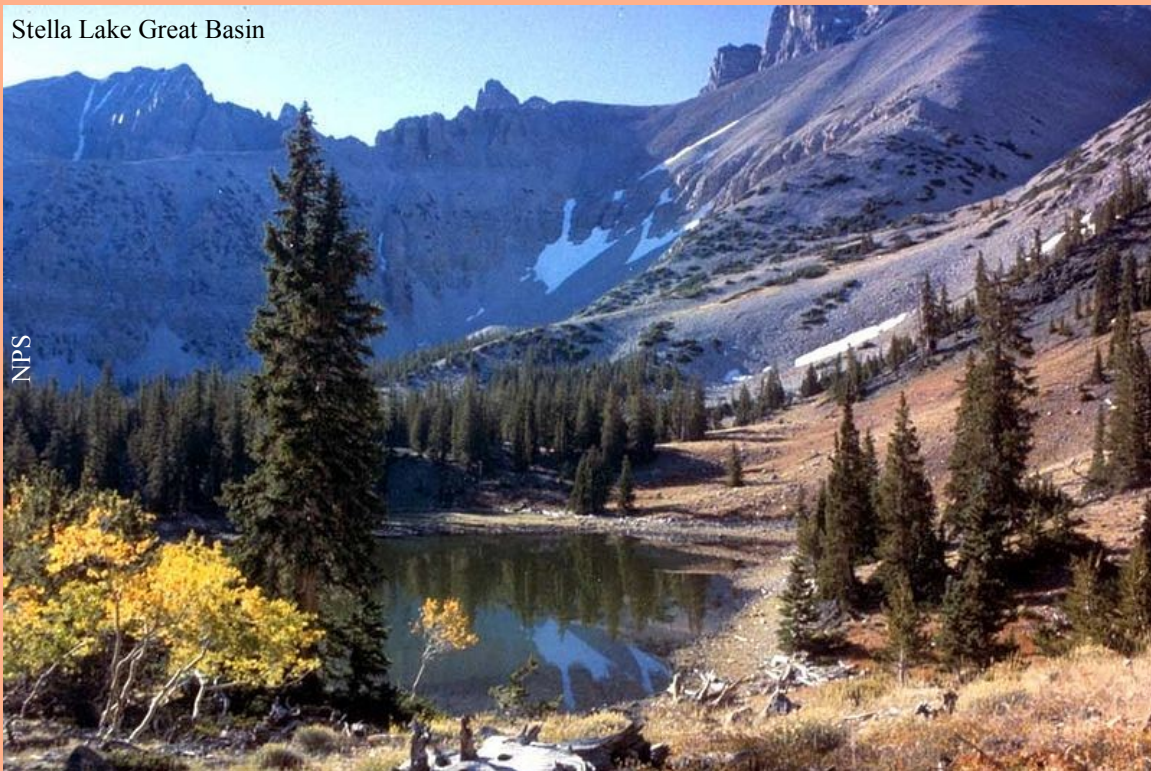


Jrbouldin

Throughout Nevada, there are many isolated, dramatic, and stunning landscapes showcasing the state's enormous diversity: from dusty deserts to glacial mountain tops to crystalline lakes. Many of these lands are preserved by Congress or by the state government, ensuring that these treasured lands remain as vibrant and wild as they have always been. The Great Basin, a wide and untamed swath in the middle of the state, is protected as a national park.

What's at Stake: Great Basin National Park

Great Basin National Park encompasses an enormous, diverse stretch of land in the heart of Nevada. Its 114 million acres include long mountain ranges separated by equally long, flat valleys. The flat stretches of hot desert valleys have abundant sagebrush, as well as hardy species like prickly pear cactus, snakes, and jackrabbits.⁷⁶ The edges of these vistas meet mountain ranges with peaks soaring above 13,000 feet, including the 13,063-foot Wheeler Peak. Beneath the summit of Wheeler Peak, a lone glacier still clings to the rock, a remnant of a past Ice Age. In the harsh climate just below the tree line the bristlecone pine can live to be 5,000 years old.⁷⁷ Above the desert valleys, aspen, fragile alpine wildflowers and ancient bristlecone pines grow, accompanied by mountains lions, coyotes, bobcats, badgers, mule deer, and pronghorn antelope. Incredibly, 70% of all North American mammals are found in this region, a testament to the diversity of the Basin's deserts, playas, mountains, rock formations, springs, caves, and creeks.⁷⁸ There are over 40 known caves filled with unique flora and fauna, including the famous Lehman Caves.⁷⁹ This National Park contains and lies adjacent to several wilderness areas such as North Jackson Mountains Wilderness (23,439 acres) and Cedar Mountain Wilderness Area (99,428 acres). The unspoiled area of Cedar Wilderness is home to a wild horse herd, known for its large, beautifully colored horses.⁸⁰



By the Numbers

Great Basin National Park not only has a stunningly rich environment, it also brings economic benefits to Nevada. The roughly 70,000 annual visitors gain the experience of true solitude in an isolated location. Hiking, fishing, and horseback riding are all popular here as well, and 50,000 people visit Lehman Caves annually.⁸¹ These beautiful marble caves are ornately decorated with rock structures like stalactites, stalagmites, helictites, flowstone, and over 300 rare shield formations, and many different tours are offered through this mysterious underground world.⁸²



Lehman Caves

Legislative Threats

The deserts, wilderness areas and parks of Nevada are unlike any others in the United States. Yet we have seen many members of Congress take aim at treasured places throughout the 112th Congress. The bills discussed below would leave places like Great Basin National Park vulnerable to development and resource exploitation.

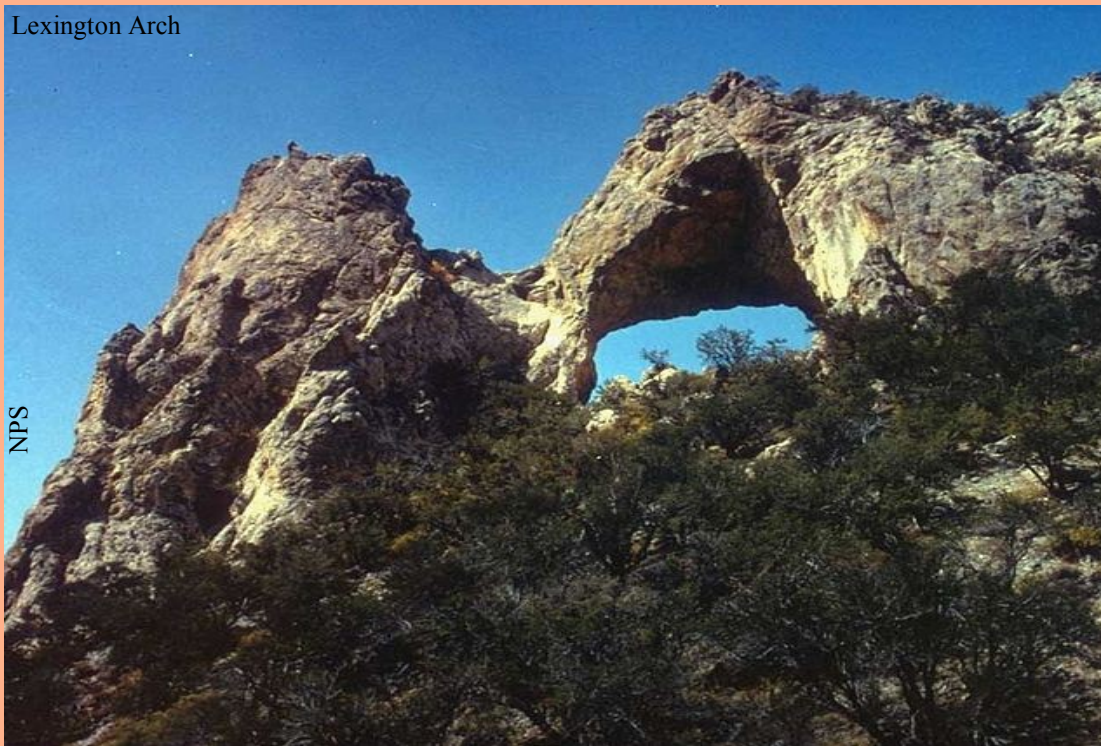
One such bill that threatens Great Basin National Park is the Roadless Release Act (H.R. 1581), proposed by Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) and cosponsored by Rep. Mark Amodei (R-NV). This bill would permit road building in some of the most sensitive and beautiful areas within the national park.⁸³ Clear cutting ancient forests and introducing roads could lead to habit degradation and fragmentation for mule deer and bobcats, among other species, as well as erosion and runoff into nearby waterways. Construction, motorized vehicles, and trucks lumbering through the park would also ruin the experience for visitors.

More Legislative Threats

Additionally, the Wilderness Development Act (H.R.2834), proposed by Rep. Dan Benishek (R-MI) and cosponsored by Rep. Mark Amodei [R-NV) and Rep. Joe Heck (R-NV), could allow motorized vehicles and equipment in wilderness areas within and near the park.⁸⁴ This could involve allowing all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, motorbikes, motorboats, chainsaws, and other motorized equipment to tear through wilderness. In addition, the bill would pave the way for logging, oil and gas drilling, and mining. The wilderness regions of the Great Basin region would suffer greatly since these lands were aside to remain unspoiled by excessive human activity, which includes preventing harmful development and motorized intrusions.

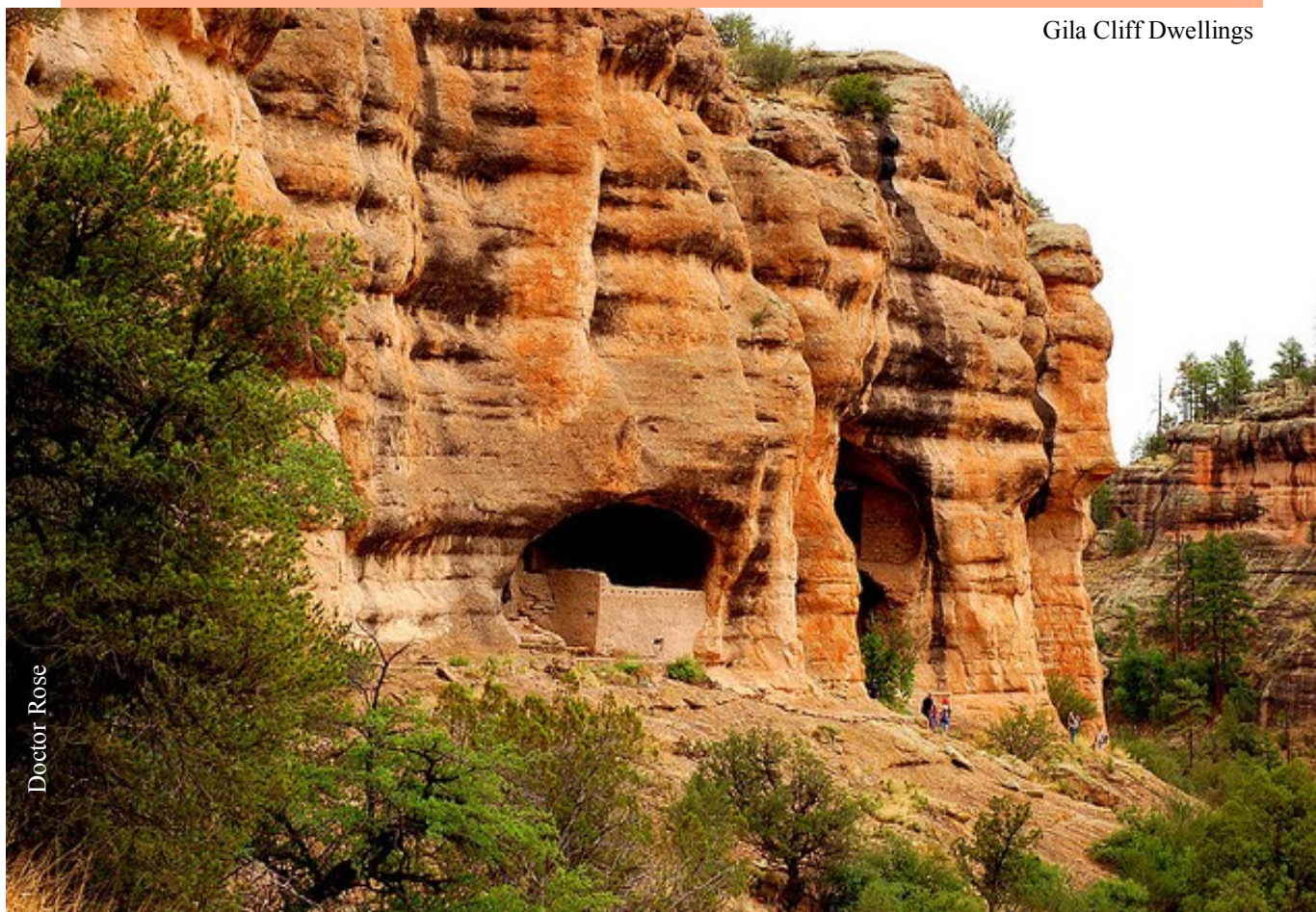
Finally, the Land Division Act (H.R.2852), proposed by Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT), would force the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service to give away 5% of their public land to Nevada, free of charge. (There are 47.3 million acres of BLM land and 6.3 million acres of national forest in the state.) Nevada would have the opportunity to sell more than 2.7 million acres of public land to the highest bidder, and in the process these lands would lose many environmental safeguards. Development, logging and mining could wreak havoc on the plant and animal life in these regions that depend on a secluded environment, and the people who run recreation services in the dismantled area could lose their livelihoods. These lands harbor irreplaceable natural resources that must not be given away to new development, so this pending legislation poses significant risks to public lands in Nevada, including forests near Great Basin National Park.

Lexington Arch



NEW MEXICO

Gila Cliff Dwellings



Doctor Rose

New Mexico, with its varied climates and diverse terrains, is home to five stunning National Forests that showcase its natural beauty, including 1.7 acres of pristine wilderness.⁸⁵ Most notably, Santa Fe National Forest and Gila National Forest are two of the largest and most popular forests in the state. They cover immense tracts of territory with landscapes shifting from towering mountain peaks to dense, shady forests and arid desert regions.

What's at Stake: Santa Fe National Forest

Santa Fe National Forest sits northern New Mexico, covering 1.6 million acres and intersecting with the most southern part of the Rocky Mountains. It encompasses alpine peaks that stretch to 13,000 feet, large grassy meadows dotted with wildflowers, rivers and glacial lakes, and canyons highlighted with colorful bands of rock. Coniferous trees cover large swaths of land, living alongside other plant species and a broad range of wildlife such as elk, black bear, mountain lion, bighorn sheep, rabbits, beavers, and muskrats. Birds in the forest include geese, grouse, quail, rock and mourning doves. Santa Fe National Forest includes over 300,000 acres of wilderness, the largest of which is the Pecos Wilderness. It is here that Truchas Peak, part of the southern Sangre de Cristo Mountains, attains the highest elevation in the forest at 13,103 feet. As part of the extreme topography that boasts a 100-foot waterfall and other impressive peaks, Truchas towers over the forests of aspen, pine, fir and spruce. The headwaters of the Pecos River are one of the eight major streams that winds through dramatic canyons here.



What's at Stake: Gila National Forest

Gila National Forest, further to the south, is another remarkable stretch of public land in New Mexico. This 3.3 million acre tract contains a diverse array of coexisting ecosystems, from the Chihuahuan and Sonoran Deserts to the Rocky and Sierra Madre Mountains to the grassy regions of the Great Plains and the Mexican Plateau. The plant species are similarly diverse, transitioning from soap tree yucca and ocotillo in the desert regions to juniper, pine, aspen fir, and spruce fir in the mountainous regions. The wildlife is similarly varied, with 30 species of fish, 11 species of amphibians, 44 species of reptiles, and 84 species of mammals. As in Santa Fe National Forest there are black bear, mountain lion, elk, and rabbits, but there are also desert reptiles such as the coral snake and the flat-tail horned lizard that thrive in the dry, barren regions.⁸⁶ Within this forest is Gila Wilderness, the largest wilderness in the southwest at 558,014 acres and the first designated wilderness area in the nation.⁸⁷ This region is home to the Mogollon mountain range, which peaks at 10,895 feet, with steep canyons between the summits carved by rivers. Vegetation here also ranges from desert to mountainous species, and at middle elevations there are rolling hills and grassland areas with juniper and pine creating a lush habitat for the diverse wildlife.

By the Numbers

In addition to being irreplaceable landmarks, these lands are also economic drivers in New Mexico. Public lands attracted 2.3 million visitors to the state in 2010.⁸⁸ Hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing on these lands contribute about \$1 billion to the state's economy each year.⁸⁹ Santa Fe National Forest alone attracts around 1.5 million visitors each year, and tourist related sectors employ approximately 7,000 people in the region.⁹⁰ Its attractions include more than 620 miles of streams and lakes popular for fishing and boating, and 1,000 miles of trails that provide opportunities for visitors to hike, horseback ride, and bike, and cross-country ski. There are also 23 campgrounds and 13 picnic areas, as well as scenic drives through the non-wilderness portions of the forest. The forest also contains the historical Santa Fe Trail, which was used by Mexican and American traders from 1821 to 1880.

Gila National Forest is also popular with tourists, attracting more than a million visitors every year.⁹¹ The recreation industry supports about 2,100 jobs, and visitor spending is by far the largest contributor to the regional economy at over \$100 million a year.⁹² A distinctive feature in this forest is the Jordan Hot Springs, which many say this is the most beautiful place in the region. Natural springs bubble up into a deep pool sheltered by a massive rocky overhang, which is situated in a grove of sycamores and ferns. The waters are 100 degrees Fahrenheit, making it a perfect spot to relax and take in the surroundings. There is also a rich history in the forest: the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument displays a series of homes set in high caves above the middle fork of the Gila River. These ruins are from the Mogollon and Pueblo Indians who lived in Gila during the 1280s through the early 1300s. Numerous trails with historical significance crisscross the region as well including the Catwalk Trail, which was constructed in the late 1800s and the trail following the precarious path along Whitewater Canyon, which was built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps and provides stunning views of the deep canyon below.

West Spanish Peak



Legislative Threats

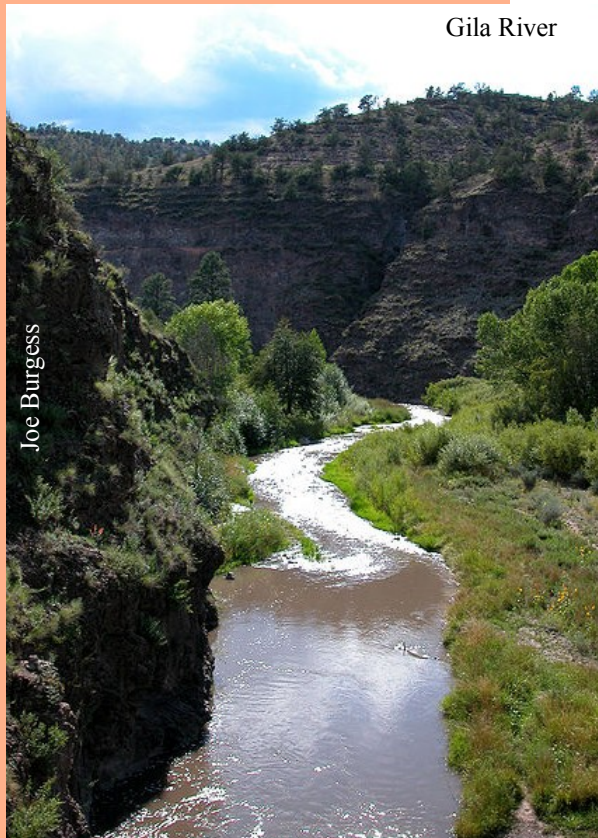
New Mexico's forests, wilderness areas and desert grasslands are unique and beautiful treasures. Many members of Congress want to open sensitive areas in Gila and Santa Fe National Forests to mining, oil and gas drilling and development, and are working to pass the bills highlighted below.

One bill that poses a threat to Gila and Santa Fe forests is the Wilderness Development Act (H.R.2834), proposed by Rep. Dan Benishek (R-MI). This bill would allow road building, motorized vehicle use, and logging on the 1.7 million acres of wilderness New Mexico's national forests, and pave the way for oil and gas drilling, mining and development. Toxic runoff from the chemicals involved in mining and drilling could leach into the groundwater, damage forests and grasslands, disrupt critical habitat and endanger New Mexico's wildlife, in areas specifically set aside by Congress to remain untouched. The introduction of motorized vehicles and equipment into wilderness areas would also ruin the experience for nature-goers and sportsmen seeking the solitude of wilderness.

The Land Division Act (H.R.2852), proposed by Representative Rob Bishop (R-UT) and cosponsored by Rep. Steven Pearce (R-NM), would force the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service to give away 5% of their lands to New Mexico for free. (There are 13.4 million acres of BLM land and 9.1 million acres of national forest in the state.) This could expose up to 1.1 million acres in New Mexico to excessive resource extraction, like rare earth mining, and oil and gas development. Not only could parcels of Gila and Santa Fe National Forests then be sold to the highest bidder, but the Bureau of Land Management could be forced to give up Otero Mesa—the largest and wildest grassland left on public lands, if this bill is signed into law. Mining and drilling in this special place would endanger more than 1,000 species of native plants and wildlife, including prairie dogs, mule deer, Aplomado falcons and more than 345 of the world's 1,500 cacti species, and could pollute the Salt Basin Aquifer, one of the largest untapped freshwater aquifers left in New Mexico.

Finally, H.R. 1581, proposed by Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) and cosponsored by Rep. Steven Pearce (R-NM) seeks to undo environmental protections in roadless areas of national forests and wilderness study areas. This bill would circumvent environmental protections and make it possible for roads to be built in roadless forests and on BLM land with wilderness characteristics, like Gila Lower Box and the Organ Mountains. This legislation could introduce a stream of motorized vehicles, miners and developers onto New Mexico's most sensitive lands, and destroy forest ecosystems- harming both the environment and the recreation industry.

Gila River



OREGON

Trillium Lake , Mount Hood



Kelvin Kay

Oregon is a state known for its expansive coastline, dense forests, and towering mountain peaks. It is home to 2.5 million acres of pristine wilderness,⁹³ which encompass the natural beauty of the land. Two regions, in particular, showcase the stunning landscapes of this state: Mount Hood National Forest and Crater Lake National Park. One is a towering mountain that is a beloved cultural icon, and the other is an unbelievably pure lake nested in an extinct volcanic crater.

What's at Stake: Mount Hood National Forest

The stunning Mount Hood National Forest in Oregon is a natural area that residents proudly claim as their state symbol. This terrain includes diverse landscapes such as glacial waterfalls, dense forests, prairies, meadows, wetlands, and of course, Mount Hood itself. Mount Hood National Forest spans more than a million acres and includes 3.14 million acres of designated wilderness. The largest of these is Mt. Hood Wilderness, which includes Mt. Hood's peak and upper slopes. The volcanic peak of Mt. Hood towers at a height of 11,240 feet, and is surrounded by eleven glaciers.⁹⁴ It is dormant, but still vents sulfurous steam near the summit. The forest itself boasts great variety, containing trees such as the lodge pole, ponderosa, western white pine, and Douglas-fir. More than a dozen waterfalls cascade down to glacial river valleys amid the shade of this deep forest. This striking landscape receives significant snow fall every year, transforming it into a pristine, winter wonderland. In warmer seasons, plants such as the Oregon grape, rhododendron, huckleberry bush, and various mushroom varieties flourish beneath the treetops, and wildflowers dot the alpine meadows. Wildlife in the forest includes black bears, mountain lions, elk, deer, red foxes, and wolves. There are several threatened and sensitive plant and animal species, including the bald eagle and northern spotted owl. The rivers and streams that flank the mountain provide habitat for salmon, steelhead, and resident trout.⁹⁵

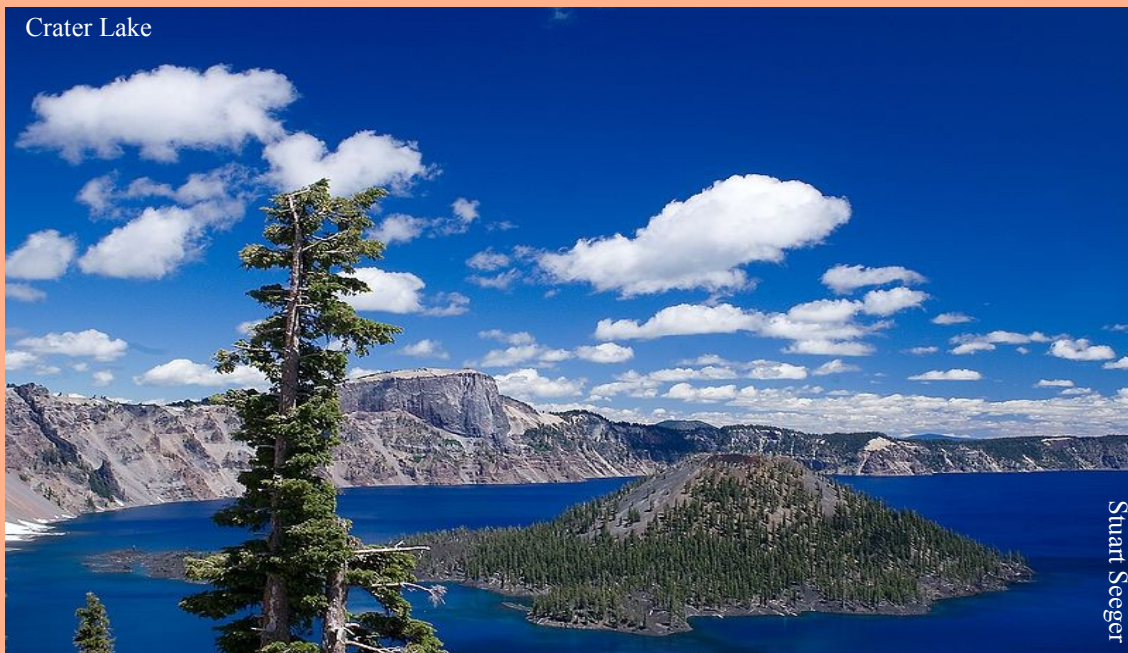
What's at Stake: Crater Lake National Park

Crater Lake National Park in Oregon is a world-renowned site, known for its unique geography and stunning visuals. The Park covers 183,224 acres, of which 90% is managed as wilderness.⁹⁶ Crater Lake itself sits in the center of a 6 mile wide caldera basin that formed 7,700 years ago when Mt. Mazama erupted then collapsed in on itself.⁹⁷ Lava flows sealed the bottom, allowing the nearly symmetrical caldera to fill with 4.6 trillion gallons of water to create the seventh deepest lake in the world at 1,932 feet.⁹⁸ The water in the basin comes solely from precipitation, mostly snowfall, which means that it is free of contaminants that rivers would bring in. Because of its purity and depth, the water is a stunning blue color and incredibly clear. It is surrounded by sheer 2000 foot high cliffs, rolling mountains, evergreen forests, and a number of volcanic mountains. A small volcanic island, Wizard Island, rises 764 feet above the lake's surface.⁹⁹ The dense forests consist of 600 plant species, with hemlock, fir, and pine dominating the terrain around the basin.¹⁰⁰ Wildflowers bloom during the short summer, while elsewhere in the park there is a barren desert of volcanic pumice, containing distinctive formations of solidified lava. In the winter the park is blanketed in snow, often 10-15 feet deep.¹⁰¹ There are 200 species of birds such as ravens, jays, and nutcrackers, and animals such as deer, ground squirrels, elk, black bear, foxes, and porcupines.¹⁰² Crater Lake serves as an outdoor laboratory and classroom where phenomena related to lake ecology, forest ecosystems, and geologic processes can be studied.

By the Numbers

Mount Hood National Forest is valuable not only for its vibrant ecosystem but also for its thriving recreation and tourism industry. This region attracts an average of 1,831,000 people per year, who spend up to \$82,771,000 annually.¹⁰³ More than 10,000 climbers come each year seeking to hike to the top of the mountain, which makes Mt. Hood the most visited snow-clad summit in America.¹⁰⁴ Visitors also come to the park for activities such as fishing, camping, boating, mountain biking, backpacking, and skiing and other snow sports in the winter. There are over 1200 miles of trail for hiking, as well as challenging whitewater kayak routes along several of the rivers. Berry-picking and mushroom collecting are also popular in the summer.¹⁰⁵ This variety of activities supports a large number of businesses in the region, creating jobs and providing an estimated \$60 million a year to recreation service providers.¹⁰⁶ The park provides employment for 5300 people in tourism and other industries, including farming that is supported by the rivers that run off the mountain into the Hood River Valley.¹⁰⁷ These waterways also supplement the domestic water supply, and provide a natural filtration system in the mountains that cuts costs for water treatment plants.¹⁰⁸

Crater Lake National Park boasts similar economic benefits. It attracts 500,000 visitors per year for activities such as hiking and camping along 140 miles of trails in the old growth forests.¹⁰⁹ There are opportunities to fish for trout and salmon in the lake, as well as take guided boat tours. In the winter, avid outdoorsmen can brave the snow for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. This tourism in the park generated over \$34 million and supported 540 jobs in 2010.¹¹⁰ There is also rich history in this area of Native American tribes. For instance, there are piles of stones called rock cairns which were perhaps associated with "spirit quests." Additionally, evidence has been uncovered that some tribes witnessed the collapse of Mount Mazama, which was kept alive in their legends.¹¹¹ This Park provides access to fascinating records of the past as well as abundant tourist opportunities for the present.



Legislative Threats

Crater Lake and Mount Hood are Oregon's crown jewels. Several bills highlighted below could open these areas up to logging, road building and development, threatening to do irreparable harm to the delicate ecosystems.

One bill that threatens both Mt. Hood National Forest and Crater Lake National Park is the Wilderness Development Act (H.R.2834), proposed by Rep. Dan Benishek (R-MI). This bill could affect the all the wilderness territory in both these regions, including the summit and upper slopes of Mt. Hood, by allowing roads and paving the way for logging and energy development. These wilderness areas were set aside so that they would remain pristine and untouched, allowing ecosystems to thrive and people to enjoy the isolation of these natural settings.

If passed, priceless old-growth forest right outside Crater Lake National Park and within Mount Hood National Forest could be clear cut, and trucks, asphalt, and motorized equipment could pollute Oregon's most pristine waterways. Not only would this ruin the experience for nature-goers, but it would endanger wildlife like Roosevelt elk, black bears, bald eagles, and Chinook and Coho salmon.

Another bill that targets roadless forests in Mt. Hood and near Crater Lake is the Wilderness & Roadless Release Act (H.R. 1581). The bill would allow road building in 1.9 million acres of sensitive, beautiful forests, including Mount Hood wilderness. Road building, motorized vehicles and logging on some of the most sensitive lands in Oregon would leave these state treasures vulnerable to habitat destruction and pollution.

Finally, the Land Division Act (H.R.2852), proposed by Representative Rob Bishop (R-UT), would force the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service to give away 5% of their lands to Oregon for free. (There are 15.7 million acres of BLM land and 15.7 million acres of national forest in the state.) This could expose up to 1.6 million acres in Oregon to logging, mining and other forms of excessive resource extraction. Public lands and national forests, like those in Mount Hood and surrounding Crater Lake, harbor irreplaceable natural resources that should remain protected. With enough pressure from extractive industries like timber companies, these lands could be sold to the highest bidder. Oregonians who run the recreation services in dismantled areas could lose their livelihoods, and development could pollute lakes, rivers and streams, damage forests and threaten wildlife.



PENNSYLVANIA

Allegheny National Forest



USFS

Allegheny National Forest, a beautiful 513,257 acre swath of land in northern Pennsylvania,¹¹² is a true state treasure. The Forest includes 9,000 acres of designated wilderness areas, which allows wildlife to thrive in a pristine environment.¹¹³ As the only National Forest in the state, Allegheny is an invaluable asset to the residents and a haven for diverse flora and fauna.

What's at Stake: Allegheny National Forest

Allegheny National Forest is situated on a rugged plateau crisscrossed by creeks and streams and a dramatic and steep topography. The wilderness areas contains some of the oldest and largest tracts of virgin beech-hemlock forest in the eastern United States, amazing scenic vistas, crystal-clear drinking water, essential habitat for Pennsylvania wildlife, and cold-water fisheries.¹¹⁴ Designated scenic areas such as the Tionesta National Scenic Area contain remnants of old growth forests, including 300-400 year old species such as the American beech, eastern hemlock, and sugar maple.¹¹⁵ There are also 71 species of fish and 300 species of mammals in the forest, including the white-tailed deer, black bear, wild turkey, snowshoe hare, red and gray fox, beaver, mink, and muskrat. Additionally, there are hundreds of bird species, including woodpeckers, hawks, great blue herons, and owls.¹¹⁶ The forest also contains the Kane Experimental Forest, which is a 1,650-acre tract that is used as a natural laboratory for scientists to carry out forestry research, in order to develop new and better forest management practices.¹¹⁷



By the Numbers

The forest is not only an ecological sanctuary but an economic asset to the state, because it provides the basis for a large recreation industry. The Pennsylvania Wilderness Act of 1984 set aside 23,000 acres of the forest as the Allegheny National Recreation Area, which provides a wide variety of backcountry recreation opportunities while ensuring the integrity of natural and historical areas.¹¹⁸ There are 179 miles of hiking trails as well as 54 miles of cross-country ski trails, and routes for biking, horseback riding, and snowshoeing. There are also 277 miles of river for canoeing and fishing in the forest, including routes on the Allegheny, Clarion, and Tionesta Creek rivers.¹¹⁹ Along the banks of these rivers there are beaches for swimming and scenic picnic areas. There are also many opportunities for hunting. Guides and outfitters offer tours and rent equipment for visitors who come to practice photography or view animals in their natural habitat.

On average, 874,000 visitors come to the forest every year, including about 36,815 wilderness visits, with an annual visitor spending of \$28,499,000.¹²⁰ The Forest also creates roughly 1,000 jobs.¹²¹ This region benefits from high property values due to the scenic views and proximity to recreational opportunities and natural settings.¹²² Historical sites throughout the Forest include an early eastern trade route in the 19th century and several Native American refugee town sites like Indian Valley.¹²³ These treasures in Allegheny National Forest are not only historically valuable but attract tourists to the region.



Mount Camelback Ski Area

Legislative Threats

Allegheny National Forest is one of Pennsylvania's greatest treasures. If passed, several bills moving through Congress would open pristine parts of the forest to logging and pave the way for destructive resource extraction like gas drilling. Certain members of Congress want to turn over acres of state forest land to make way for gas wells.

One bill that threatens the Allegheny Forest is the Wilderness & Roadless Release Act (H.R. 1581), proposed by Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) and cosponsored by Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-PA). The bill would open 25,000 acres of forest to road building and leave the pristine areas of the forest vulnerable to destructive development. The Allegheny's wildlife from woodpeckers and great blue herons, to black bears and fish, would be at risk from habitat degradation and runoff pollution as well. Truck traffic and clear cuts would destroy the sense of seclusion that is so valuable in these areas as well. The Allegheny boasts the only tract of roadless forest in Pennsylvania, and is far too special to give up to corporate interests.



Another bill that threatens to damage Allegheny National Forest is the Wilderness Development Act (H.R. 2834), proposed by Rep. Dan Benishek (R-MI) and cosponsored by Reps. Lou Barletta (R-PA), and Mike Kelly (R-PA). This bill adds loopholes to the Wilderness Act to allow road building, motorized vehicle use, and logging in areas currently protected as wilderness. Like the Roadless Release Act, this would target vulnerable wilderness areas within the National Forest, which have been set aside by Congress to remain untouched natural settings. Cutting down trees and introducing a continuous stream of vehicles would undermine the sanctity of the forest. Moreover, H.R. 2834 would also pave the way for gas drilling on national forest land, allowing gas companies to continue a dangerous form of drilling known as hydraulic fracturing that has contaminated the drinking water for many Pennsylvanians with benzene, toluene, formaldehyde and other dangerous contaminants, polluted rivers and streams like the Monongahela and Neshaminy Creeks, and clearcut acres of state forestland.

Finally, the so-called Conservation & Economic Growth Act (H.R. 2578), proposed by Rep. Jeff Denham (R-CA) would waive 16 cornerstone environmental and public health laws within 100 miles of the Canadian border. It includes a revised version of H.R. 1505, proposed by Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) that would allow Department of Homeland Security and Border Patrol to build roads, fences, and towers, and close fishing and hunting areas within the Allegheny, without any notice to the public. Waiving cornerstone environmental laws in the national forest could cause irreparable damage to this gorgeous piece of Pennsylvania and disrupt recreational activities that are so beneficial to the economy.

VIRGINIA



Shenandoah National Park is a magnificent ribbon of 197,438.76 acres of forest nestled in the heart of Virginia.¹²⁴ Nearly 80,000 acres, or 40% of the park, is designated as wilderness, making it one of the largest wilderness areas in the Eastern United States.¹²⁵ This beautiful area is a famous natural setting only a short drive from major metropolitan areas, which serves as both a tourist destination and provides valuable habitat for flora and fauna.

What's at Stake: Shenandoah National Park

The rolling peaks and steep slopes in this forest showcase the gorgeous landscape punctuated by graceful waterfalls, sheltered stream valleys, and dense plant life. Crystal clear water flows from more than 800 freshwater springs that join with three major rivers.¹²⁶ The park includes 300 square miles of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and two peaks — Stony Man and Hawksbill — that exceed 4,000 feet.¹²⁷ Shenandoah's varied topography creates great diversity in plant and animal life. Oak-hickory trees dominate the forest; cove hardwood, spruce-fir, chestnuts, and yellow poplars are also abundant, as well as understory foliage like jack-in-the-pulpit, interrupted fern, blueberries, azaleas, and lady slipper orchids.¹²⁸ This forest hosts more than 200 species of birds and 50 species of mammals including deer, bobcats, raccoons, opossums, gray foxes, and eastern cottontails.¹²⁹ This pristine wilderness not only provides a habitat for wildlife but also serves as a unique site for research in a quiet, undisturbed natural area. Scientists who have the opportunity to study this environment gain a better sense of what is essential for developing new and better forest management practices.



By the Numbers:

Not only is Shenandoah National Park a thriving ecosystem, it also provides many recreational opportunities that contribute significantly to Virginia's economy. It attracts 1.5 million visitors every year and brings in \$960 million to the state's economy annually.¹³⁰ Skyline Drive is the park's only road, and this scenic byway has 75 overlooks with spectacular views. There are 516 miles of trails on which hikers can enjoy waterfalls, scenic vistas, and quiet woods, providing a unique experience in unspoiled nature. Trails include 101 miles along the Appalachian Trail and 200 miles of designated horse paths.¹³¹ In addition, visitors come to

backpack, climb, bird-watch, camp, walk and fish. Rangers lead tours through remote areas and historical sites, from Civil War battlefields during Stonewall Jackson's Shenandoah Valley campaign in 1862 to President Herbert Hoover's retreat at Rapidan Camp.¹³² All these recreational opportunities create thousands of jobs in the region, both for forest personnel and for people living near the park who provide lodging, food, and equipment for visitors.¹³³ The National Park Service estimates that Shenandoah infuses \$70 million annually into the economies of its neighboring communities.¹³⁴ Additionally, two thirds of Shenandoah's visitors go on to explore other attractions in Virginia. This National Park is a beautiful landmark in Virginia and is a significant asset both economically and environmentally.

Skyline Water Trail



Great Falls, Potomac River

Legislative Threats:

Virginia is home to some of the most beautiful landmarks on the eastern coast: from Shenandoah National Park, to the Appalachian mountains, to the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. Bills moving through Congress put Virginia's treasures at risk and could open many public lands up to logging, development and toxic coal and uranium mining.

There are several bills that threaten Shenandoah National Park. One of these is the Wilderness Development Act (H.R.2834), proposed by Rep. Dan Benishek (R-MI) - and cosponsored by Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA). This bill would circumvent the Wilderness Act and allow motorized vehicle use, logging, and road building in Shenandoah's wilderness areas. Congress designated nearly 80,000 acres as pristine wilderness free from motorized vehicles and energy development—protecting the park's valuable ecosystems and making sure that Virginians have the opportunity to visit the park for generations to come. Road building, development, clearcutting, and mining could all destroy essential habitat—once damaged, flora and fauna, especially threatened species like the peregrine falcon and Shenandoah salamander,¹³⁵ might never rebound. This bill targets vulnerable wilderness areas in the national park and jeopardizes a true sanctuary for wildlife and city-dwellers alike.



Lester Via/NPS

Another bill that poses a threat to forest land near Shenandoah is the Wilderness & Roadless Release Act (H.R.1581), proposed by Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) and co-sponsored by Reps. Robert Goodlatte (R-VA) and Morgan Griffith (R-VA). This bill would open some of the most sensitive and beautiful areas in George Washington and Jefferson National Forests to road-building. If passed, this bill could lead to habitat degradation and fragmentation for more than 200 plant species, 78 species of amphibians and reptiles, 200 species of birds, 60 species of mammals, 100 species of freshwater fishes and mussels, and could destroy essential habitat for more than 50 threatened and endangered species.

The American Lands Act (H.R. 2588), by Rep. Ted Poe (R-TX), would force the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service to sell 8% of their respective federal land to the highest bidder annually until 2016. This year alone, the two agencies would be forced to sell off nearly 36 million acres of forest and public land to corporate interests. Much of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, stretching along the Appalachian Mountains and running parallel to Shenandoah, could be sold to the highest bidder if this bill becomes law. Dividing up valuable public lands and handing them over to coal or uranium mining companies, loggers, or developers could do enormous damage to treasured lands across Virginia. More than 1 million acres in George Washington and Jefferson forests could be sold off to the highest bidder, and both the ecosystems and recreation sites that rely on this forest would be harmed.

Recommendation

America's treasured places, from the heights of Mount Hood to the old growth forests of Allegheny National Forest, need to be protected for generations to come. Cornerstone environmental laws enacted decades ago, provide critical protections for our most beloved natural places. Public lands are part of our national legacy and enjoy widespread support from citizens everywhere, yet several members of Congress, many of whom are mentioned in this report, are working to roll back the laws that protect the best of America. People care deeply about these places—the public needs to demonstrate to their representatives that conserving our state treasures should be a top priority. We urge our elected officials to reject bills that threaten to strip public lands of the laws that were passed to conserve them. We ask the American people to hold members of Congress who give in to the pressures of big developers, oil and mining industries, and others working to weaken public lands protections, accountable in the next election.

Conclusion

For generations upon generations, public lands have been an essential part of our natural landscape and national character. These tracts of land, home to diverse wildlife, plant life, and crystal clear waters, support unique and essential ecosystems. From local parks to isolated wilderness landscapes, public lands provide places for people to reconnect with the outdoors. They provide unique opportunities for outdoor activities like hiking, camping, boating, and skiing. More than 275 million people visit national parks every year,¹³⁶ which generates billions of dollars for the economy and supports thousands of jobs.

Public lands are protected by cornerstone environmental laws enacted by past Congresses. These crucial laws ensure that our water and air is clean, endangered species and their habitats are protected, national parks and monuments can be established and maintained, and wild landscapes across the country remain pristine and undeveloped. Yet throughout the 112th Congress, we have seen more than 50 bills move that seek to undermine the cornerstone environmental protections that maintain the integrity of these places. The legislators who proposed these bills want to increase logging, road building, mining, and other forms of exploitative development—activities that could mar landscapes, fragment habitats and pollute ecosystems. Once damaged, many of our treasured places might never rebound. In short, the pending legislation highlighted in this report poses a real danger to the natural settings that make up the best of America. Our leaders in Washington need to understand that this is a critical issue to citizens around the country and must work to defeat all bills that threaten America's beautiful public lands.



Kootenay Lake

Darren Kirby

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