



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
RANKING MEMBER BRUCE WESTERMAN

Oppose H.R. 803, the “Protecting America’s Wilderness and Public Lands Act”

- This package of lopsided public lands bills is a clear example of Democrats’ radical desire to arbitrarily lock up land under onerous restrictions, kill jobs in the energy and mining industry, surrender our energy and mineral needs to countries hostile to United States’ interests, and restrict public access and recreation opportunities.
- Several Members of Congress and local officials that represent some of the largest areas impacted by this bill were not meaningfully consulted and strongly oppose the legislation.
- The legislation will have dire consequences for forest health, restrict access to public lands and waters, lock up critical energy resources and diminish our nation’s military readiness.
- This bill did not go through regular order, it received no hearings or mark-ups in the 117th Congress and, in fact, was scheduled for floor consideration before the Natural Resources Committee even organized.

This divisive package reflects an early giveaway to the same extreme environmental coalition pushing the **ill-advised 30x30 Initiative**. Major public lands decisions require local collaboration and stakeholder input as they have real consequences for communities on the ground neighboring this land. None of the bills contained in this package come close to the type of balance and local consensus necessary for designations of this magnitude.

Collectively, this bill creates nearly **1.5 million acres of new wilderness**, the most restrictive federal land use classification; permanently **withdraws 1.2 million acres from mineral production**; designates over **1,200 miles of wild, scenic, and recreation rivers**; expands nearly **110,000 acres of national monument land**; and adds over **400,000 acres of recreation, conservation, and special management areas** throughout four Western states. Simply put, this bill focuses on locking up lands and creating new management burdens instead of allowing agencies to focus their resources on what they already own.

Many of the local communities impacted by this wilderness package raised significant concerns ranging from the loss of motorized access and recreation, the elimination of multiple use of the land, undermining of state water rights and the overall threat to local economies and rural jobs. However, the biggest concern in these Western states is the **increased threat of catastrophic wildfire** that will result from these new wilderness areas and wild and scenic river designations. The legislation will effectively restrict forest management across wide swaths of federal lands in three states that rank in the top ten nationally for severe wildfire threat, including California and Colorado which rank 1st and 3rd, respectively. Additionally, some wilderness areas in the bill are designated in the wildland-urban interface, posing a direct threat to life, property, and forest health for nearby communities.

The 1.2 million acres permanently withdrawn from mineral production in this bill is a play right out of the #BidenBan playbook that is destroying jobs across our country as our nation works to recover from the devastating COVID-19 pandemic. The repercussions of these ill-advised bans not only **hurt rural communities**, but further **tether the United States to unstable and hostile regimes** for our energy and mineral needs.



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Ironically, many of the lands under consideration in this bill **do not even meet the basic characteristics to be considered wilderness**. Instead, the bill arbitrarily designates areas as wilderness and wild and scenic rivers despite official testimony provided by the relevant land management agencies that many of these designations are inappropriate and not recommended. To declare areas that do not possess these characteristics very plainly undermines the integrity of the Wilderness Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

This package includes the following:

H.R. 803 (DeGette), Colorado Wilderness Act

- This bill would designate 659,059 acres as wilderness in 36 areas throughout Colorado, adding to the existing 3.5 million acres of wilderness already protected in the state.
- The Mesa and Garfield County Commissions oppose this legislation due to concerns with restricting access, loss of water rights, and increased risk of forest fires.
- Many local stakeholders are concerned that the creation of 659,059 additional acres of wilderness will severely limit existing motorized access and eliminate energy development that is vital to maintain jobs and provide revenue to the state.
- 77% (509,876 acres) of the wilderness designations in Rep. DeGette's bill are in Rep Boebert's district. The remaining 23% are in Rep. Lamborn's. Rep. DeGette does not represent one acre of the impacted land. Even though most of this bill impacts Representative Boebert and Representative Lamborn's districts, they were not meaningfully consulted and do not support the bill.

H.R. 878 (Huffman), Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act

- This bill would create roughly 307,459 acres of wilderness, 480 miles of new wild and scenic rivers, and an 871,414-acre restoration area, and includes other provisions pertaining to public lands in Northern California.
- Local stakeholders, such as the Del Norte County and the Trinity County Board of Supervisors, expressed many concerns with the wilderness portions of the bill, including issues with restricted access, lands not meeting wilderness criteria, and impairment of any potential commercial use of the lands the county could benefit from, since 80% of it is owned by the federal or state government.

H.R. 999 (Kilmer), Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

- This bill would designate 131,900 acres as wilderness and 470 miles of wild and scenic rivers.
- State legislature representatives opposed similar legislation in the past, citing concerns over increased wildfire risk and the struggling logging industry, which could negatively impact local jobs.
- Despite claims that local concerns have been addressed, the city councils of Aberdeen and Cosmopolis (which are situated near the designations) as well as the Gray Harbor County Commission (which encompasses parts of the wilderness designations within its boundaries) strongly oppose the bill.

H.R. 973 (Carbajal), Central Coast Heritage Protection Act

- This bill would create or expand 14 new wilderness areas and create a new 400-mile national recreation trail. In total, this bill seeks to designate 287,500 acres of land as wilderness, which would be cut off from mining and logging operations.
- Part of this bill would establish 80,000 acres near the Carrizo Plain National Monument as a wilderness area. This is in direct response to the 2018 approval by the Bureau of Land Management of a new oil and gas well within the monument utilizing the same pad as an existing older well that was grandfathered in when the monument was established.



H.R. 693 (Chu), San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act

- This bill would add 109,167 acres to an Obama-era national monument, create a 49,387-acre national recreation area, and create 30,659 acres of new wilderness.
- The Monrovia City Council, which represents a nearby city affected by the proposed expansion, opposes the legislation citing burdensome bureaucracy as a concern.

H.R. 1075 (Schiff), Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act

- The bill would add approximately 191,000 acres to the existing 154,000 acres that currently comprise the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA). This is roughly 20,000 more acres than the National Park Service (NPS) recommended.
- Only 15% of the SMMNRA land is currently owned by the NPS and approximately half the lands are privately owned with houses and businesses on site. In addition to private property rights concerns, expansion of the SMMNRA will make it more difficult (if not impossible) to site new communication towers and needed public utilities.

H.R. 577 (Neguse), Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy Act

- This bill creates land restrictions for approximately 400,000 acres of land in Colorado in the form of new wilderness, recreation, and conservation areas.
- The language falls far short of its stated goals of promoting outdoor recreation and instead creates 73,068 acres of new wilderness, which will severely limit most forms of outdoor recreation.
- There is significant opposition to this bill from many Colorado stakeholders and the bill does not have the support of any Republican member of the Colorado delegation. Despite the fact that roughly 65 percent of the lands affected by this bill are in Representative Boebert's district, she was never consulted on this bill. This partisan bill is a discouraging example of continued disregard for member engagement shown by the Democrats concerning legislation impacting other members' districts.

H.R. 1052 (Grijalva), Grand Canyon Protection Act

- H.R 1052 would permanently ban mineral development on approximately 1 million acres of public lands in Northern Arizona. This misguided land grab solely affects lands far outside the Grand Canyon and impacts the largest tract of uranium deposits in the country. Making this land permanently off limits for mineral development is a clear threat to American energy security. Despite a large domestic supply of uranium, the domestic uranium industry is currently supplying less than one percent of the uranium needed to power the U.S. nuclear reactor fleet. In 2019, domestic operators mined only 0.5% of U.S. reactor requirements, which is not enough for a single reactor.
- Furthermore, about half (47.5%) was sourced from countries that are unfriendly to the United States in 2019, including Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Chinese-owned mines in Namibia. Critically, Canada and Australia together only provided 39% of total supplies to the US in 2019, down from 42% in 2018 and 51% in 2017. Some information on foreign-sourced uranium is withheld for proprietary reasons or unknown according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). The deposit impacted by this bill contains high grade uranium and will be needed to expand the domestic supply.

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