

**Statement of
Leah Baker
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Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior**

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

**H.R. 2199, Central Coast Heritage Protection Act
July 10, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 2199, the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act. The bill would designate three wilderness areas within the Carrizo Plain National Monument managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). H.R. 2199 would also establish the Black Mountain Scenic Area on lands managed by the BLM and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and designate or expand nine wilderness areas within the Los Padres National Forest, two of which would include some BLM-managed public lands. Finally, the bill designates the Condor National Recreation Trail across the Los Padres National Forest and small portions of BLM-managed public lands.

The Department of the Interior (Department), through Secretarial Orders 3347, 3356, and 3366, has pledged to expand access to America's public lands, to increase hunting, fishing, and recreational opportunities nationwide, and to enhance conservation stewardship. In addition, the Department is focused on restoring full collaboration and coordination with local communities and making the Department a better neighbor.

As a matter of policy, the Department strongly supports Congressional action to resolve issues of wilderness designation and release of WSAs on public lands across the West, and we welcome opportunities to further those efforts. However, we also want to ensure that designating new wilderness areas on public lands that are outside of existing WSAs is the most appropriate land management tool, and that such designations would not unnecessarily impede public access or limit outdoor recreational opportunities. The Department would like the opportunity to work with the sponsors and the Subcommittee to address a number of issues and technical concerns outlined in this statement.

Background

The Carrizo Plain National Monument (Monument), which includes over 206,000 acres of public lands, was designated on January 17, 2001. The Monument, located only a few hours from Los Angeles in San Luis Obispo and Kern Counties, California, features the white alkali flats of Soda Lake, Painted Rock, open grasslands, and a broad plain rimmed by mountains. When conditions are right, numerous wildflowers can carpet the valley floor. In addition, the Chumash, Salinian, and Yokuts Tribes have called this area home for at least the last 10,000 years. Lands within the Monument boundary are cooperatively managed by the BLM, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) through a Memorandum of

Understanding established to ensure that the three entities manage their respective lands in a complementary fashion.

Under the Monument's 2010 Resource Management Plan (RMP), the BLM currently manages approximately 44,500 acres of public lands for the protection of wilderness characteristics. The decision to manage these public lands for wilderness characteristics under the RMP occurred as part of a 10-year collaborative planning effort with strong public support. Within the Monument, the BLM also manages the approximately 17,984-acre Caliente Wilderness Study Area (WSA) in a manner that does not impair its suitability for potential future preservation by Congress as wilderness, as required by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA).

H.R. 2199, Central Coast Heritage Protection Act

Wilderness (Sections 3-5, 7)

H.R. 2199 would designate three new wilderness areas within the Carrizo Plain National Monument – the Caliente Mountain Wilderness (approximately 35,600 acres), the Soda Lake Wilderness (approximately 13,300 acres), and the Temblor Range Wilderness (approximately 12,500 acres). Each of these areas generally serves as habitat for a variety of plant and animal life, including tule elk, upland game birds, and other species managed by CDFW. They also provide many recreational opportunities, such as hunting, hiking, camping, and – due to their remoteness – provide visitors with outstanding opportunities to be alone with nature.

Only Congress can determine whether to designate WSAs as wilderness or to release them for other multiple uses. The WSAs included in the proposed wilderness designations have been pending final resolution by Congress since 1991. The Department, therefore, supports Congress settling the status of these lands, which would provide certainty to public land users in central California.

Pursuant to the priorities outlined by the Department, we would welcome the opportunity to work with the sponsors and the Subcommittee to ensure that wilderness designation on public lands outside of existing WSAs is the most appropriate mechanism to adequately protect these areas. Alternative management approaches could conserve sensitive resources while still accommodating other uses and activities permitted on BLM-managed lands.

If Congress opts to proceed with designation of these lands as wilderness, we would like to work on minor and technical amendments to this section, including boundary adjustments to enhance manageability and to ensure that the proposed designations are consistent with existing WSAs and areas managed for wilderness characteristics under the 2010 Carrizo Plain RMP.

The bill would also designate or expand nine additional wilderness areas within the Los Padres National Forest. We defer to the U.S. Department of Agriculture regarding provisions in the bill concerning lands and interests managed by the USFS; however, the proposed addition to the Garcia Wilderness Area would include approximately 120 acres of BLM-managed public lands, and the proposed addition to the Machesna Mountain Wilderness Area would include approximately 530 acres of BLM-managed public lands. As with the proposed designations within the Monument, the Department would like to work with the sponsors to ensure that wilderness designation on public lands outside of existing WSAs is the most appropriate

mechanism to adequately protect these areas. If Congress opts to designate these areas as wilderness, we would like to work with the sponsors on a clarifying amendment to this section.

Wild & Scenic Rivers (Section 6)

Section 6 of H.R. 2199 pertains to lands managed by the USFS. The BLM defers to the U.S. Department of Agriculture regarding these provisions.

Scenic Areas (Section 8)

Section 8 of the bill would designate two scenic areas – the Condor Ridge Scenic Area (approximately 18,600 acres) in the Los Padres National Forest and the Black Mountain Scenic Area (approximately 15,800 acres) on lands administered by the USFS and the BLM, including the approximately 160-acre Black Mountain WSA. The Department would like to work with the sponsors to address some technical concerns with this section, including the addition of a reference to the Secretary of the Interior.

National Trails (Section 9)

Section 9 of the bill would establish the Condor National Recreation Trail. The Department has not reviewed a detailed map for the trail, but we understand that the majority of the trail traverses the Los Padres National Forest with a small segment that traverses BLM-managed public lands. The Department supports the designation of this trail, which would increase recreational opportunities, but we would like the opportunity to more closely review the proposed route and work with the sponsors and Subcommittee to address other technical concerns, including correction of a citation to the National Trails System Act.

Miscellaneous Provisions (Sections 10-12)

Sections 10 and 11 of the bill pertain to lands managed by the USFS. The Department defers to the U.S. Department of Agriculture regarding these provisions. The Department has no objection to section 12, which addresses use by members of Native American tribes.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 2199, the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act. We look forward to working with the sponsors and the Subcommittee to address the issues and technical concerns outlined above as this bill moves through the legislative process.

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**House Committee on Natural Resources
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**H.R. 2546, Colorado Wilderness Act
July 10, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 2546, the Colorado Wilderness Act. H.R. 2546 proposes wide-ranging wilderness designations on over 721,000 acres of lands primarily managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Some of the proposed designations also include small portions of lands managed by the National Park Service (NPS) and Bureau of Reclamation (BOR).

As a matter of policy, the Department of the Interior (Department) supports Congressional action to resolve wilderness designation and wilderness study area (WSA) release issues on public lands across the West, and we welcome opportunities to further those efforts. However, we also want to ensure that designating new wilderness areas on public lands outside of existing WSAs is the most appropriate land management tool. While wilderness designation may be appropriate for some of the areas included in this legislation, the Department is concerned that certain designations in the bill may present management challenges and be inconsistent with existing land uses, as well as other uses that are of importance to the public. In addition, we note that the conservation proposals that have reached fruition over the last decade have been more limited in geographic scope, spanning a county, a specific region, or a Congressional District. As a result, the Department cannot support H.R. 2546 as currently written.

The Department welcomes the opportunity to work cooperatively with the sponsors of the legislation, the Subcommittee, and all members of the Colorado delegation on wilderness issues in the State. The individual conservation designations in the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (Public Law 116-9) may serve as a good model for refining the approach in H.R. 2546, especially over such a broad and diverse set of lands.

The Department defers to the U.S. Department of Agriculture regarding the proposed designations on lands managed by the USFS.

H.R. 2456

H.R. 2456 proposes to create or expand 30 wilderness areas totaling approximately 686,000 acres on lands primarily managed by the BLM and USFS, with small portions of some of the designations also on lands managed by the NPS and BOR. The bill would also designate two potential wilderness areas totaling approximately 35,300 acres on lands managed by the BLM and USFS. These designations are largely focused in western Colorado, and they generally serve

as habitat for a diversity of plant and animal life and provide important opportunities for hiking, hunting, rock climbing, horseback riding, and other forms of outdoor recreation.

The Department notes that the Castle Peak and Browns Canyon areas, as well as some of the other proposed designations, are within existing WSAs that we recommended as suitable for wilderness in 1991. Depending on specific boundaries, the Department could support the designation of these areas as wilderness. We would, however, like the opportunity to work further with the sponsors and the Subcommittee on a few boundary adjustments to these proposals to avoid private property, established motorized routes, and producing oil wells. In addition, there are several modifications that we believe would aid implementation, including language clarifying certain terms and the applicable responsible BLM field offices, as well as clarifying amendments regarding how any potential wilderness areas should be managed.

The Department also requests that language be added to the bill ensuring that portions of underlying WSAs not designated as wilderness by the bill be released for other multiple uses.

There are also several areas proposed for wilderness designation under H.R. 2546 where conflicts with existing uses and other public use interests make manageability as wilderness challenging. Recreational use has exploded on public lands throughout the West, including in Colorado. While many recreational activities, such as hunting, fishing, and hiking are compatible with wilderness designation, others, such as mountain biking and off-highway vehicle use, are not. Some of the areas proposed for wilderness designation contain popular motorized or mechanized recreation areas.

For example, the proposed Bangs Canyon Wilderness is bisected by the nationally recognized Tabeguache Trail. Just over 8 miles of the 142-mile Tabeguache Trail connecting Grand Junction and Montrose pass through the area proposed for wilderness designation. This trail is popular with the public and accommodates both mountain bikes and motorized recreationists, both of which are incompatible with wilderness designation. Under the BLM's 2015 Grand Junction Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP), approximately 19,600 acres of the proposed wilderness are within a Special Recreation Management Area and managed as a back-country primitive area. The remaining approximately 1,300 acres is currently managed for mechanized or motorized uses.

Additionally, existing energy development poses inherent challenges with wilderness designations, creating complex management issues pertaining to extensive active mining claims and oil and gas leases within a designated wilderness. For example, approximately 11,000 acres of the proposed South Shale Ridge Wilderness contain existing oil and gas leases, and include 9 producing wells. Another 16,000 acres of oil and gas leases within this area are currently pending additional environmental review. This area, part of the Piceance Basin, has been identified by the BLM as an oil and gas emphasis area for over 20 years.

Likewise, nearly half of the proposed Snaggletooth Wilderness is currently under lease for oil and gas development, with 27 leases existing within the area, and active uranium mining claims are present. Similarly, there are 23 active uranium mining claims in the proposed Table Mountain Wilderness. An extensive network of 47 miles of primitive roads supporting uranium

exploration crisscrosses the area. As directed by the President in Executive Order 13817, the Department is currently assessing critical mineral resources on Federal public lands and offshore lands. Additionally, uranium has been identified by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) as a critical mineral necessary to the economic and national security of the United States.

The Department is concerned that the relatively large number of existing resource uses in these areas would make it difficult for the BLM to manage them in a manner consistent with the requirements of the Wilderness Act. As such, the Department would like to work further with the sponsors and the Subcommittee on boundary adjustments to the proposals to ensure that these areas can be most effectively managed for multiple uses.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 2546. The Department looks forward to working with the sponsors and the Subcommittee to address the issues outlined above as this bill moves through the legislative process.

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**H.R. 252, Pershing County Economic Development and Conservation Act
July 10, 2019**

Thank you for inviting the Department of the Interior (Department) to testify on H.R. 252, the Pershing County Economic Development and Conservation Act. This bill authorizes public land sales, exchanges, and conveyances in Pershing County, Nevada, and designates approximately 136,600 acres of public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as seven new wilderness areas.

The Department has pledged to expand access to America's public lands, to increase hunting, fishing, and recreational opportunities nationwide, and to enhance conservation stewardship through Secretarial Orders 3347, 3356, 3366, and 3373. To advance those goals, we are focusing on restoring full collaboration and coordination with local communities and making the Department a better neighbor.

Secretary Bernhardt is committed to ensuring that public access for outdoor recreation is adequately weighed when determining the appropriateness of the disposal or exchange of public lands, which is why Secretarial Order 3373 was one of his first orders signed as Secretary. While the Department supports the goals of H.R. 252 that align with this important priority, we are concerned that the broad scope of the proposed land disposals as currently written could ultimately decrease public access and limit outdoor recreational opportunities.

H.R. 252

H.R. 252 directs Federal land sales, exchanges, and conveyances in Pershing County, Nevada. The legislation also designates approximately 136,600 acres of public lands as 7 wilderness areas and releases approximately 48,600 acres of BLM-managed WSAs from further study.

Public Land Sales & Exchanges (Titles I & II)

Title I of H.R. 252 directs the sale, at fair market value, or exchange of up to approximately 334,000 acres of BLM-managed public lands as specified on the legislative map and that have been identified as potentially suitable for disposal as part of the land use planning process. Title I requires that all lands authorized for sale or exchange be appraised en masse within one year of enactment and every five years thereafter. Any of these lands with an appraised value of less than \$500 per acre may be exchanged on an acre-for-acre basis with private land in a Management Priority Area, as identified by the Secretary, within the area depicted on the legislative map. Land sales under Title I may not exceed 150,000 acres; exchanges are exempted from this limitation. The first land sale must be completed within one year of enactment, with at

least one sale conducted every year thereafter, until the acreage limit for sales has been reached, or a sale postponement period requested by the county.

Title II of the bill directs the sale, at fair market value as determined by an appraisal, of up to approximately 102,000 acres of BLM-managed public lands identified on the legislative map to a “qualified entity,” which is defined in the bill as the owner or authorized leaseholder of the mining claims, mill sites, or tunnel sites currently existing on any portion of the lands to be sold. The qualified entity would assume all costs of the sales, including survey and administrative costs.

Proceeds from the sales directed by Titles I and II of the bill would be disbursed to the State of Nevada, Pershing County, and a special account in the U.S. Treasury for a number of specific purposes, including reimbursing costs associated with preparing sales, habitat conservation and restoration, and securing public access to Federal lands, among others.

The Department is committed to increasing access to America’s public lands and is concerned with the broad scope of the sales and transfers contemplated by Titles I and II. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the sponsor on boundary modifications or other language to ensure that the proposed sales and transfers do not inadvertently decrease public access or recreational opportunities in Pershing County and that they ensure a fair return to the American taxpayer.

Wilderness (Title III)

Title III of H.R. 252 designates 7 wilderness areas totaling approximately 136,600 acres. Of these lands, approximately 55,100 acres are within existing wilderness study areas (WSAs) and approximately 81,500 acres have not previously been identified as suitable for wilderness by the BLM. Title III also releases approximately 48,600 acres from WSA status, allowing these areas to be managed according to the existing BLM land use plans. Only Congress can determine whether to designate WSAs as wilderness or to release them for other multiple uses. The WSAs included in the proposed wilderness designations have been pending final resolution by Congress since they were established in 1991.

The Department notes that the lands proposed for wilderness designation by H.R. 252 generally serve as habitat for a diversity of plant and animal life and provide important opportunities for hiking, hunting, rock climbing, camping, horsepacking, and other forms of outdoor recreation in the Nevada desert.

As a matter of policy, the Department supports Congressional action to resolve wilderness designation and WSA release issues on public lands across the West, and we welcome opportunities to further those efforts. However, we also want to ensure that designating new wilderness areas on public lands outside of existing WSAs is the most appropriate land management tool, and that such designations would not unnecessarily impede public access or limit outdoor recreational opportunities. The Department believes that alternative management approaches could conserve sensitive resources while still accommodating the full range of uses and activities permitted on other BLM-managed public lands.

If Congress opts to proceed with designation of these lands as wilderness, we would like to work with the sponsors on minor and technical amendments to this section, including the use of standard wilderness designation language, boundary modifications for enhanced manageability and consistency with the Wilderness Act, and clarifying language related to telecommunications and climatological data collection devices and noxious weed treatments.

Conclusion

As a matter of policy, the Department supports the completion of land exchanges and transfers that further the public interest, consolidate ownership of scattered tracts of land to make them more manageable, and advance public policy objectives. The Department strongly supports restoring full collaboration and coordination with local communities and making the Department a better neighbor.

The Department has substantive as well as minor technical modifications to recommend, and we look forward to working with the sponsor and the committee to resolve these issues. The Department appreciates the work of Congressman Amodei on H.R. 252 and his efforts to promote multiple uses and foster economic development on BLM lands in Nevada.

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**H.R. 2250, Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act
July 10, 2019**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 2250, the Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act, which provides direction for the future management of Federal lands in Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Tehama, Siskiyou, and Trinity counties, California and Josephine County, Oregon. H.R. 2250 establishes the South Fork Trinity-Mad River Restoration Area, creates or expands 17 wilderness areas, designates seven new potential wilderness areas, and designates new wild, scenic, and recreational rivers on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS), and U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Of the approximately 313,000 acres of new wilderness proposed by the bill, approximately 246,000 acres are on FS-managed lands, approximately 36,000 on BLM-managed public lands, and 31,000 on NPS-managed lands.

The bill also designates the Horse Mountain Special Management Area and Sanhedrin Conservation Management Area on lands managed by the USFS and authorizes the designation or study of three new recreation trails on lands primarily managed by the USFS, with a small portion of one of the trails traversing BLM-managed public lands. Finally, the bill includes language to facilitate the restoration of the Redwood National and State Parks, to authorize the Northwest California Public Lands Remediation Partnership, and to establish two visitor centers.

The Department of the Interior (Department) has pledged to expand access to America's public lands, increase hunting, fishing, and recreational opportunities nationwide, enhance conservation stewardship, and reduce wildfire risk through Secretarial Orders 3347, 3356, 3366, and 3372. To advance these goals, we are focused on restoring full collaboration and coordination with local communities and making the Department a better neighbor.

As a matter of policy, the Department supports Congressional action to resolve issues of wilderness designation and release of wilderness study areas (WSAs) on public lands across the West, and welcomes opportunities to further those efforts. However, we also want to ensure that designating new wilderness areas on public lands outside of existing WSAs is the most appropriate land management tool, and that such designations would not unnecessarily impede public access or limit outdoor recreational opportunities. The Department would like the opportunity to work with the sponsors and the Subcommittee to address a number of issues and technical concerns outlined in this statement.

In this testimony, we address proposed designations on lands administered by the BLM and the NPS. We defer to the Department of Agriculture regarding the designations on the lands and interests administered by the USFS.

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

Restoration and Economic Development (Title I)

Title I of H.R. 2250 creates the approximately 730,000-acre South Fork Trinity-Mad River Restoration Area for the purpose of establishing, restoring, and maintaining fire-resilient forest structures, reducing wildfire risk, protecting and restoring aquatic habitat and fisheries, and protecting the quality of water resources. The vast majority of the lands within this proposed area are managed by the Forest Service.

Title I also authorizes the formation of a Northwest California Public Lands Remediation Partnership among multiple entities to remediate impacts from illegal marijuana cultivation on public lands. The Department notes that illegal marijuana cultivation is one of the major law enforcement issues on public lands in this area of California. The remoteness and relative inaccessibility of public lands in the state makes them ripe for drug trafficking organizations and private individuals to seek profit from illegal marijuana cultivation.

The BLM currently partners with Federal, state, tribal, county, and local partners to support a number of anti-marijuana cultivation initiatives and task forces, including the White House Office of National Drug Policy High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Initiatives, the California Department of Justice Campaign Against Marijuana Planting Task Force, and the North State Major Investigative Team. The Department supports efforts to further combat the deleterious effects of illegal marijuana cultivation on public lands.

Title I authorizes initiatives to restore degraded redwood forest ecosystems in Redwood National and State Parks. The Department recognizes the need to rehabilitate degraded landscapes in Redwood National and State Parks and notes that the NPS is currently engaged with state and nonprofit partners, through existing authorities, in a planning effort to implement forest restoration treatments on approximately 39,500 acres in the parks.

Title I authorizes the establishment of a visitor center in Del Norte County, California, to assist in fulfilling the purposes of Redwood National and State Parks and the Smith River National Recreation Area. Currently, the NPS cooperates with state and nonprofit partners to operate existing visitor facilities in the county. The Department recognizes the value of establishing a new visitor center, in cooperation with public and private partners, provided that it can be done while the NPS focuses resources on reducing its \$11.9 billion deferred maintenance backlog and addressing other critical park needs.

Title I authorizes a study to evaluate the feasibility and suitability of establishing overnight accommodations on Federal land at the southern and northern boundaries of Redwood National and State Parks, or on land within 20 miles of the boundaries. If found to be suitable and feasible, the bill further authorizes the establishment of agreements with private and nonprofit organizations for the development, operation, and maintenance of overnight accommodations.

The Department recommends that the study be completed before Congress decides whether to authorize new partnerships for the purpose of offering overnight accommodations at Redwood National and State Parks.

Recreation (Title II)

Among other provisions affecting the USFS, Title II of H.R. 2250 authorizes a study for the Bigfoot National Recreation Trail. The proposed trail route is primarily on USFS-managed lands, with less than three miles crossing BLM-managed public lands. The Department concurs that the USFS should be the lead agency in assessing the feasibility of the trail and ultimately administering it.

Title II authorizes the establishment of agreements with qualified private and nonprofit organizations to undertake trail and campground maintenance, public education, visitor contacts, outreach, and visitor center staffing on Federal lands in Mendocino, Humboldt, Trinity, and Del Norte counties in California. The Secretary currently exercises existing authorities to work with private and nonprofit entities for these functions. We would appreciate the opportunity to work the Subcommittee to refine this section to ensure it does not conflict or overlap with existing law.

Conservation (Title III)

Title III of H.R. 2250 creates or expands 17 wilderness areas and creates seven potential wilderness areas on over 313,000 acres of Federal land in northwestern California. These designations are on lands managed primarily by the USFS (approximately 246,000 acres), BLM (approximately 36,000 acres), and the NPS (approximately 31,000 acres). Title III also designates 379 miles of new wild, scenic, and recreational rivers on lands managed by the BLM, NPS, and the USFS, and establishes the approximately 14,200-acre Sanhedrin Conservation Management Area on lands managed by the USFS.

The Department notes that the BLM-managed public lands proposed for wilderness designation by H.R. 2250 generally serve as habitat for a diversity of plant and animal life and provide important opportunities for hiking, hunting, rock climbing, horseback riding, and other forms of outdoor recreation in northwestern California.

We would like the opportunity to work with the sponsor and the Subcommittee to ensure that wilderness designation on lands outside of existing WSAs is the best mechanism for protecting these resources while restoring balance to other important uses. The Department believes that alternative management approaches could conserve sensitive resources while still accommodating the full range of uses and activities permitted on other BLM-managed public lands.

In addition, the Department notes that some of the areas proposed for wilderness designation may present management challenges because of their small size, isolated nature, or lack of adequate public access. Moreover, the BLM determined as part of the land use inventory and planning process that several of the proposed areas do not possess wilderness characteristics. If Congress opts to proceed with designation of these lands as wilderness, we would like to work on boundary modifications to enhance manageability, and technical corrections to aid

implementation, including updated acreage descriptions and language to improve naming consistency.

The Department also requests that language be added to the bill ensuring that portions of underlying WSAs not otherwise designated as wilderness by the bill be released for other multiple uses. In addition, there are a few other small BLM-managed WSAs within the counties affected by the bill. We recommend that the sponsor consider resolving the status of these areas as well.

Title III would also designate approximately 379 miles of new Wild and Scenic Rivers under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Over 35 creeks and rivers are impacted by the bill, including 20 crossing BLM-managed public lands and three crossing NPS-managed public lands. If Congress opts to add these segments to the National Wild and Scenic River System, the Department would like to work with the sponsor on technical changes, including changes to classification of certain river segments to enhance manageability. The Department also would like to work on boundary adjustment to avoid designations that predominantly cross through private lands.

Finally, Title III designates approximately 31,000 acres of Redwood National Park as potential wilderness and directs the potential wilderness area to be managed as wilderness. The bill further requires a report to Congress every three years on the status of ecological restoration within the potential wilderness area and the area's progress toward eventual wilderness designation. Although the bill provides an exception for ecological restoration activities in the potential wilderness area, the Department does not support the designation of potential wilderness while its work to rehabilitate forested watersheds throughout Redwood National and State Parks is in progress.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 2250, the Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation and Working Forests Act. The Department appreciates the sponsor's effort to address difficult resource and land management issues in northwestern California and looks forward to continuing to work with the sponsor and the Subcommittee as this bill moves through the legislative process.