

THE PROTECTING AMERICA'S WILDERNESS ACT

February 2020

The Protecting America's Wilderness Act permanently protects public lands and waters in Colorado, California, and Washington by designating approximately 1.3 million acres of wilderness and incorporating more than 1,000 river miles into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS).

- Title I includes the text of the Colorado Wilderness Act (H.R. 2546 - Rep. DeGette, D-CO) which would designate approximately 600,000 acres of public land as wilderness.
- Title II includes the text of the Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act (H.R. 2250 - Rep. Huffman, D-CA) which would designate approximately 312,500 acres of public land as wilderness and protect approximately 479.8 river miles as components of the NWSRS.
- Title III includes the text of the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act (H.R. 2199 - Rep. Carbajal, D-CA) which would designate approximately 287,500 acres of public land as wilderness and protect 230.8 river miles as components of the NWSRS.
- Title IV includes the text of the San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act (H.R. 2215 - Rep. Chu, D-CA) which would designate approximately 30,700 acres of public land as wilderness and protect 45.5 river miles as components of the NWSRS.
- Title V includes the text of the Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act (H.R. 1708 - Rep. Schiff, D-CA) which would expand the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area by approximately 191,000 acres, protecting important natural and cultural resources while expanding access for one of America's most park-poor cities.
- Title VI includes the text of the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (H.R. 2642 - Rep. Kilmer, D-WA) which would designate approximately 131,900 acres of public land as wilderness and protect 464.5 river miles as components of the NWSRS.

ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Our public lands are one of the best resources we have to respond to the climate crisis. Wilderness areas, wild and scenic rivers, and other protective designations help safeguard biodiversity by protecting critical habitat and increasing ecological connectivity; protecting ecosystem services, such as clean water and air; and providing a natural laboratory for education and scientific research. The Protecting America's Wilderness Act includes the Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act, originally introduced by Representative Jared Huffman (D-CA-02), which would increase wildfire resiliency in Northwest California through the restoration of degraded forest ecosystems impacted by climate change. This bill increases community and firefighter safety by requiring federal land management agencies to work with local residents to develop a new coordinated fire management plan that prioritizes reducing fuel near existing roads, infrastructure, and other developed areas.

FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Protecting America's Wilderness Act safeguards incredible and unique landscapes for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. Wilderness and wild and scenic river designations are permanent and lasting protections for the most pristine and remote federal lands and waters. The bill represents a meaningful expansion of our National Wilderness Preservation System and the National Wild and Scenic River System, which today only protects less than one-quarter of one percent of the nation's rivers.

The Protecting America's Wilderness Act includes the Colorado Wilderness Act, originally introduced by Representative Diana DeGette (D-CO-01), which would protect approximately 600,000 acres of public land as wilderness. These designations would provide lasting protections for the region's abundant biodiversity, including several threatened and endangered species; clean drinking water; unparalleled outdoor recreation opportunities; and important cultural sites.

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ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The Protecting America's Wilderness Act would dramatically improve recreational access for underserved communities while protecting vital sources of clean drinking water to ensure that environmental justice communities are able to reap the benefits of conservation.

The Protecting America's Wilderness Act includes the San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act, originally introduced by Representative Judy Chu (D-CA-27), which would enhance protections for the San Gabriel Mountains and Watershed and increase opportunities for public lands access in Los Angeles County. Although Los Angeles County is one of the most park-poor and polluted regions in the United States, more than 15 million people live within a 90-minute drive of the San Gabriel Mountains, which provide Angelenos with 70 percent of their available open space and 30 percent of their drinking water. This bill ensures that residents of this dense urban area – particularly minority and low-income communities – have the opportunity to access the physical, mental, educational, and environmental benefits of nearby public lands.

THE SAN
GABRIEL
MOUNTAINS
PROVIDE
30%
OF LOS ANGELES
COUNTY'S
DRINKING
WATER

OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY

THE RECREATION
ECONOMY
GENERATES
\$887
BILLION
IN CONSUMER
SPENDING EACH
YEAR

Recreation on public lands and waters provides significant economic benefits for local communities. In fact, research has shown that rural communities with access to outdoor recreation assets fare better in terms of job creation, economic sustainability, and resident retention than communities without outdoor recreation assets. In particular, the outdoor recreation economy brings customers to local businesses and increased tax revenues to state and local governments. These benefits, however, are heavily dependent on the preservation of natural landscapes and outdoor recreation opportunities. The public lands and river protections included in the Protecting America's Wilderness Act ensure that this critical economic sector will continue to grow for the benefit of local communities and future generations.

The designations included in the Protecting America's Wilderness Act would directly enhance public lands recreation in three states: California, Washington, and Colorado. In total, the U.S. national outdoor recreation economy generates 7.6 million direct jobs, \$887 billion in annual consumer spending, \$65.3 billion in federal tax revenue, and \$59.2 billion in state and local tax revenue.

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RESPECTING TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

**PROTECTS
TREATY
RIGHTS
AND TRIBAL
ACCESS FOR
TRADITIONAL
USES**

Since time immemorial, tribal communities have lived on and stewarded the lands we now call our public lands. Unfortunately, past policies often dispossessed tribal communities of their land and restricted access to sacred cultural sites. This bill protects ancestral homelands, preserves treaty rights and ensures tribal access for traditional and cultural uses.

The Protecting America's Wilderness Act includes the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act, originally introduced by Representative Salud Carbajal (D-CA-24), which would protect areas in California's Central Coast where more than a dozen tribes in the region have lived, hunted, and traded for centuries. This bill would protect this culturally significant region from the imminent threats posed by oil and gas development while guaranteeing the rights of tribal communities to access the designated wilderness, scenic, and potential wilderness areas for cultural and religious purposes.

COLLABORATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Protecting America's Wilderness Act highlights the importance of stakeholder engagement and collaboration from start to finish. Each aspect of the bill reflects the ideas, input and ongoing engagement among diverse and locally driven coalitions that include sportsmen, recreation enthusiasts, conservationists, local businesses, federal agencies, and other members of the public. As a result, this bill enjoys support from a broad coalition of stakeholders fighting to protect public lands, increase access for underserved communities, and ensure a clean environment for all.

The Protecting America's Wilderness Act includes the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, originally introduced by Representative Derek Kilmer (D-WA-06), which was developed through a multi-year stakeholder process with a focus on addressing local concerns. This process included more than 500 group and individual meetings with various stakeholders across the State of Washington that helped refine the proposal to accommodate concerns from local stakeholders, including loggers, while ensuring lasting protections for critical salmon habitat, clean water resources, and recreational opportunities on the Olympic Peninsula.

**REFLECTS
ONGOING
COLLABORATION
WITH DIVERSE
STAKEHOLDERS
AND LOCAL
VOICES**