

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. _____

Commemorating the 45th anniversary of the Wilderness Act.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself and Mr. MCCAIN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Commemorating the 45th anniversary of the Wilderness Act.

Whereas September 3, 2009, will mark the 45th anniversary of the date of enactment of the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), which gave to the people of the United States the National Wilderness Preservation System, an enduring resource of natural heritage;

Whereas great writers of the United States, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, George Perkins Marsh, and John Muir, poets such as William Cullen Bryant, and painters such as Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, Frederic Remington, Albert Bierstadt, and Thomas Moran, have defined the distinct cultural value of wild nature and unique concept of wilderness in the United States;

Whereas national leaders, such as former President Theodore Roosevelt, reveled in outdoor pursuits and diligently sought to preserve opportunities to mold individual character, to shape the destiny of the Nation, to strive for balance, and to ensure the wisest use of natural resources, so as to provide the greatest good for the greatest number of people as possible;

Whereas luminaries in the conservation movement, such as scientist Aldo Leopold, forester Bob Marshall, writer Howard Zahniser, teacher Sigurd Olson, biologists Olaus Adolph, and Mardy Murie, and conservationist David Brower, believed that the people of the United States could protect and preserve the wilderness in order for the wilderness to last well into the future;

Whereas Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, a Democrat from Minnesota, and Representative John Saylor, a Republican from Pennsylvania, originally introduced the Wilderness Act with strong bipartisan support in both houses of Congress;

Whereas, with the help of colleagues (including cosponsors Senators Gaylord Nelson, William Proxmire, and Henry “Scoop” M. Jackson, and the Senate floor manager, Senator Frank Church) and conservation allies (such as Secretary of Interior Stewart L. Udall and Representative Morris K. Udall), Senator Humphrey and Representative Saylor worked tirelessly for 8 years to secure nearly unanimous passage of the legislation, with a vote of 78 to 8 in the Senate and 373 to 1 in the House of Representatives;

Whereas critical support in the Senate for the Wilderness Act came from 3 Senators who still serve in the Senate as of

2009: Senator Robert C. Byrd, Senator Daniel Inouye, and Senator Edward M. Kennedy;

Whereas President John F. Kennedy, who took office in 1961 with an agenda that included a plan to enact wilderness legislation, was assassinated before he could sign into law a bill concerning the wilderness;

Whereas 4 wilderness champions, Aldo Leopold, Olaus Murie, Bob Marshall, and Howard Zahniser also passed away before witnessing passage of a wilderness bill;

Whereas President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Wilderness Act in the Rose Garden on September 3, 1964, establishing a system of wilderness heritage, as President Kennedy and the conservation community had envisioned and advocated for ardently;

Whereas, in 2009, as a consequence of popular support, the people of the United States continue to have a system that protects wilderness for the permanent good of the United States;

Whereas, over the 45 years since the enactment of the Wilderness Act, various Presidents of both parties, leaders of Congress, and experts in the land management agencies within the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture have expanded the system of wilderness protection;

Whereas the Wilderness Act instituted an unambiguous national policy to recognize the natural heritage of the United States as a valuable resource and to protect the wilderness for future generations to use and enjoy;

Whereas wilderness offers numerous values for an increasingly diverse populace, allowing youth and adults from urban and rural communities to experience nature and explore opportunities for healthy recreation;

Whereas wilderness provides intact, healthy, biologically diverse ecosystems that will better withstand the effects of global warming and help communities in the United States adapt to a changing climate;

Whereas wilderness provides billions of dollars of ecosystem services in the form of safe drinking water, clean air, and recreational opportunities;

Whereas 44 of the 50 States have protected wilderness areas;

Whereas the abundance of natural heritage of the United States is seen from Alaska to Florida, from Fire Island in the Long Island South Shore of New York and West Sister Island of Lake Erie in Ohio, to larger areas such as the Mojave National Preserve in California and the River of No Return in Idaho; and

Whereas President Gerald R. Ford stated that the National Wilderness Preservation System “serves a basic need of all Americans, even those who may never visit a wilderness area—the preservation of a vital element in our heritage” and that “wilderness preservation ensures that a central facet of our Nation can still be realized, not just remembered”: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) commemorates the 45th anniversary of the
3 Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.);

4 (2) recognizes and commends the extraordinary
5 work of the individuals and organizations involved in
6 building the National Wilderness Preservation Sys-
7 tem; and

1 (3) is grateful for the wilderness, a tremendous
2 asset the United States continues to preserve as a
3 gift to future generations of the United States.