

**Alaska Wilderness League · Campaign for America's Wilderness
Earthjustice · Republicans for Environmental Protection · Sierra Club
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance · The Wilderness Society**

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**Senate Adopts Resolution Celebrating 45th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act
*Conservation Groups Cheer Renewed Push for Land Protection***

Washington, DC (August 5, 2009) The US Senate today overwhelmingly adopted a resolution commemorating the 45th anniversary of the Wilderness Act – the tool by which citizens can work with Congress to add shared public land to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

“As the nation celebrates this important milestone in our conservation history, it's also time to note how well served the American public has been by all the excellent work by Congress and various Presidents over the past four-and-a-half decades to protect our common ground,” said Mike Matz, executive director of the Campaign for America's Wilderness. “The National Wilderness Preservation System is now 109 million acres strong and still growing, and that's a wonderful gift to pass along to future generations.”

Offered by Sen. Russ Feingold (D-WI) and Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), and cosponsored by Democrats, Republicans and Independents, the resolution honors the role played by conservation champions of all backgrounds and political stripes, and notes the critical support for the passage of the landmark legislation 45 years ago by three Senators still serving today, Robert Byrd, (D-WV), Daniel Inouye (D-HI) and Ted Kennedy (D-MA).

“Setting aside public land as wilderness provides space for plants and wildlife to adapt to changing climate and other impacts from global warming,” said Myke Bybee, wilderness campaigns coordinator for the Sierra Club. “Wilderness designation in particular provides numerous benefits for wildlife by protecting vital habitat from encroaching development, oil and gas drilling, mining, and illegal off-road vehicle abuse.”

"As our nation strives to find the key to national health care legislation, the National Wilderness Preservation System has been promoting and sustaining the health and well-being of all Americans since 1964," said Bill Meadows, President of The Wilderness Society. "Congress established the System 'for the good of the whole people,' and 45 years later we continue to reap

the benefits wilderness provides like clear air, clean water and opportunities to retreat from the stress of our everyday lives."

The resolution praises the Wilderness Act for ensuring a natural legacy for future generations and cites the many benefits of protected pristine land as a source of clean air and water and as "healthy, biologically diverse ecosystems that will better withstand the effects of global warming."

David Jenkins, Vice President for Government and Political Affairs at Republicans for Environmental Protection said, "It is fitting that this resolution, like the Wilderness Act itself, is the product of a bi-partisan love of--and commitment to--wilderness. This is as it should be, because the American wilderness experience forged the ethic of responsibility, hard work and faith that comprises our character and underpins our resilience as a people and as a nation."

"At 45 years old, the Wilderness Act still succeeds in allowing Americans to take walks on the wild side of their public lands," said Marty Hayden, Vice President for Policy & Legislation at Earthjustice. "As our nation's population has become more and more urban, having true wildlands where Americans can go reconnect with nature has become more priceless than ever."

When the Wilderness Act was signed into law on September 3, 1964, it immediately protected nine million acres, including such wild icons as the Gila Wilderness in New Mexico, the Bob Marshall in Montana, and the John Muir Wilderness in California. Since that time, more than a hundred million additional acres of protected land have been added to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Still, this remains less than five percent of the nation's landmass. Today, efforts continue from coast to coast to protect more of our last remaining wild places as a gift for future generations.

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