

February 24, 2016

The Honorable Tom McClintock, Chair  
House Subcommittee on Federal Lands  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20215

The Honorable Niki Tsongas, Ranking Member  
House Subcommittee on Federal Lands  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20215

Dear Chairman McClintock and Ranking Member Tsongas:

The Wilderness Society writes to express views on the legislation being heard tomorrow in the Subcommittee on Federal Lands, and we respectfully request that this letter be included in the February 25, 2016 hearing record for the Subcommittee.

America's national forests, wildlife refuges, parks, and public lands are part of our national identity. Our public lands were created so all Americans, regardless of wealth or social status, would be able to enjoy access to the outdoors in perpetuity. That our public lands should be open to everyone to experience is one of our nation's proudest and most sacred traditions.

We are therefore disappointed that for one of its first hearings of the year, the Subcommittee has chosen to hear a suite of bills that deliver not on that tradition but rather on the demands of extremist groups and anti-government activists who are pushing to privatize, de-fund and close our parks and open spaces.

Three of the bills being heard tomorrow would rob Americans of their freedom to access these lands. These bills would turn management - and in one case, ownership - of our shared public lands over to the states, paving the way for states to then privatize or auction them for drilling, mining, and logging. We urge the Subcommittee to protect Americans' access to our shared public lands and reject attempts to sell them to the highest bidder by opposing the following three bills:

**H.R. 2316** - Self-Sufficient Community Lands Act, sponsored by Congressman Raul Labrador (R-ID)

H.R. 2316 would create an unprecedented approach to management of public lands by ceding management to a handful of extractive industries. As drafted, H.R. 2316 would allow a governor of any state to appoint an "Advisory Committee," comprised of extractive industries and county officials, to manage anywhere from 200,000 to 4 million acres of National Forest system lands, called "Community Forest Demonstration Areas," in any way the advisory committee chooses. The Advisory Committee would have complete control in deciding how to manage public lands they choose as Demonstration

Areas. Lands chosen for inclusion in the Community Forest Demonstration Areas would be exempt from all environmental laws, including the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts. This is an unprecedented approach to privatizing public lands that will lead to destruction of public access, wildlife habitat and recreational use of public lands that are owned by all Americans.

**H.R. 4579:** Utah Test and Training Range Encroachment Prevention and Temporary Closure Act, sponsored by Rep. Chris Stewart (R-UT)

H.R. 4579 threatens wilderness quality lands in Utah's West Desert. This bill would giveaway over 6,000 miles of road right-of-ways across federal lands to counties, including routes that would bisect roadless areas like proposed wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas that are being considered for designation as Wilderness. The bill would also give away several proposed wilderness areas to the State of Utah for development and does not propose to protect any wilderness quality lands in the area, which is out of sync with bipartisan efforts to manage the Utah Test and Training Range in the past.

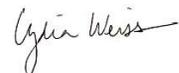
**HR 3650:** State National Forest Management Act of 2015, sponsored by Rep. Don Young (R-AK)

HR 3650 would authorize any state to request and receive up to 2 million acres of National Forest System lands within their borders for timber or other extractive development. This bill is an attempt to seize lands currently held for all Americans for the purpose of increasing timber yields, requiring the federal government to cede these lands to any state which requests them. Transfers would include surface and subsurface rights as well any real property or assets related to managing those lands. All federal mining claims would be administered by the State as well.

America's national forests provide improved air quality, recreational opportunities, fish and wildlife habitat, large landscapes, opportunities for scientific study and research and so much more. This legislation would fundamentally undermine the multiple use mandate for our forests by elevating logging as the principal goal.

Thank you for considering our views on these bills.

Sincerely,



Lydia Weiss  
Director of Government Relations, Lands