



Resolution #14

Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs  
Approved, September 10, 2006

SUPPORT A TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON DAMAGING PUBLIC LANDS BILLS OSTENSIBLY  
PROMOTING WILDERNESS PROTECTION

Several damaging public lands bills are potentially headed for fast-track passage in the U.S. Congress. Some support these bills, or portions of these bills, for their wilderness designations, but the bills are laden with environmentally damaging provisions and land privatization schemes that have serious implications for future public land and wilderness protection. Because of the many controversial provisions in these bills and the opposition they have generated, there is a strong likelihood that their congressional sponsors will attempt to bypass normal legislative processes, or combine their bills with other non-controversial measures, in order to gain their passage in the waning days of this Congress.

To date, there are three bills that have attracted the most attention and opposition. They include:

- the Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act (H.R. 3603);
- the Washington County (Utah) Growth and Conservation Act (S. 3636; H.R. 5769); and
- the Owyhee (Idaho) Initiative Implementation Act (S. 3794).

The list of damaging provisions in these "quid pro quo" bills is very long. Some of the most harmful include:

- more than 75,000 acres of public land will be given away or sold to private developers or local governments; numerous pipelines, roads, ATV play areas, and other destructive developments will be authorized in several states;
- more than 400,000 acres of currently protected Wilderness Study Areas will be released to multiple-use management, including mining, drilling, and off-road vehicle use;

-- special provisions will allow a host of incompatible activities in areas designated as wilderness, including: routine ATV, helicopter or other vehicle use by ranchers for herding livestock, state game officials for wildlife management, and local governments for fire control; eliminating reserved water rights for fish, wildlife or ecosystem function; creating legal rights for commercial outfitters and equestrian users-a precedent that congressional leaders have noted will be exploited by ORV users and other motorized and non-motorized interests.

A broad coalition of public lands organizations is circulating an open letter to fellow conservationists and members of Congress calling for a temporary moratorium on pushing these damaging public lands bills. It has been endorsed by more than 50 organizations in its first week of circulation. We currently face one of the most anti-environment, anti-wilderness Congresses in recent memory-one that demands a very high price to pass wilderness bills. However, there is a strong likelihood that the upcoming election will significantly change the makeup of Congress, putting more wilderness and public lands-friendly members in charge of environmental legislation. A temporary moratorium would take advantage of these potential changes in Congress.

The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs supports the call for a temporary moratorium on pursuing the above-mentioned (H.R. 3603, H.R. 5769, and S. 3636, and S. 3794) damaging public lands bills in Congress.

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