

Livestock Grazing in Wilderness: Time for a Change

by Kevin Proescholdt

Livestock grazing in designated Wilderness inflicts great damage on these areas that are supposed to be protected as “untrammeled by man.” Many people don’t even realize that livestock grazing is allowed in Wilderness. But such grazing does occur, and the federal agencies that administer Wilderness increasingly fail to protect Wilderness, instead authorizing livestock grazing practices that cause increasing degradation to Wilderness. It is well past time for a change, a change that will better protect Wilderness from livestock grazing damage.

In a major compromise made to pass the 1964 Wilderness Act, livestock grazing was allowed to continue where it currently existed and with the caveat of special regulations required to protect Wildernesses from grazing’s negative impacts. Section 4(d)(4) of the Wilderness Act states that “the grazing of livestock, where established prior to the effective date of this Act, shall be permitted to continue subject to such reasonable regulations as are deemed necessary by the Secretary of Agriculture.” For Wildernesses designated after 1964, this clause has been interpreted to mean that livestock grazing could continue if it had occurred at the time of an area’s wilderness designation.



North Mariposa Mountains Wilderness, Arizona.

on how to manage grazing in Wilderness. While Subcommittee Chair Rep. John F. Seiberling (D-OH) sympathized with the ranchers’ need to act quickly in emergency situations, he was unsupportive of language that grandfathered in all customary uses of motorized equipment for grazing activities. He noted that there should be regulations “which are going to be more restrictive in wilderness

areas than in nonwilderness” and declared that “we better not designate a wilderness if we are just going to have a completely unchanged activity.” Ten years later, the same CGGs were issued for U.S. Department of Interior agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The CGGs explicitly prohibit curtailing or eliminating grazing solely because an area is designated Wilderness.

(This statement leads many agency employees to mistakenly believe that they cannot at all limit or control grazing in Wilderness.) The CGGs also permit the perpetuation of existing facilities (fences, line cabins, stock tanks, stock pond dams, etc.) as well as the use of motorized equipment and motor vehicles for emergencies or “where practical alternatives do not exist.” The federal land management agencies have often expanded the overly-generous exceptions in the CGGs to allow motor vehicles for tending sheep and cattle, fixing fences, distributing salt, and just “riding the range,” seemingly with little regard for wilderness values.

Currently, livestock graze about 10 million acres of the 52.4 million acres of Wilderness in the Lower 48 states. This livestock grazing occurs in over 330 Wilderness areas and in all 11 western states. There are also about 3 million additional acres of unassigned or “vacant” grazing allotments in the National Wilderness Preservation System,

Grazing continued on page 3

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In 1980, the U.S. House of Representatives issued so-called “Congressional Grazing Guidelines” (CGGs) to provide further guidance to the U.S. Forest Service

COVID-19 Offers A Lesson In Wildness

by Talasi Brooks



I am writing this from Boise, Idaho, where most of the time, the Owyhee mountains on the Oregon border about 40 miles away are obscured by air pollution. But not today—in the era of COVID-19 and social distancing, their silhouettes are clear against the horizon. I hear that the smog over Los Angeles has cleared, as well, and that wildlife long driven into hiding in the heavily-trafficked Yosemite Valley are ambling boldly through the center of the Park where tourists usually throng at the foot of El Capitan. Sea turtles are thriving on vacant beaches. As the global economy has ground to a halt in the face of this existential threat

to humanity, our everyday lives are getting a little more like Wilderness.

Pretty nice, really.

In the Winter 2019 issue of *The Watcher*, Wilderness Watch's Executive Director, George Nickas, wrote about how taking effective action to address climate change demands a fundamental shift in the way we live—rooted in principles of self-restraint and humility familiar to students of Wilderness. While it seems like governments (and especially the current U.S. government) have largely been unwilling to force the structural changes needed to save us from the mounting climate crisis, the immediate danger from COVID-19 has lit a fire under their rears. It turns out governments can indeed take swift action when motivated.

But, at a cost. The COVID-19 epidemic has provided a striking look at how connected we all are and also how fragile our global economy is. Many people are out of work, the stock market is tanking, and we do not know when life as we know it will be able to resume. Some of us are experiencing scarcity that we have never known before in our lifetimes as supply chains are disrupted and consumers hurry to stockpile essential goods. Confronted with this scarcity, people are panic buying domestic chickens and seeds in an effort to reclaim some self-reliance—so much so that some seed companies will no longer ship to non-commercial growers. Some people are also panic buying firearms and ammunition.

If there's anything to learn from this epidemic, it's this—humans are not truly masters of the environment, we are part of it. After all, the coronavirus was transmitted to humans from animals. And, our purchasing choices and lifestyle choices add up. The global economy is driven by...us. Where we scale back our impacts by driving less, becoming more self-reliant, or choosing to invest more in local economies, it creates space for the Earth to recover and for other living creatures to exist.

Of course, wilderness is a wonderful teacher when it comes to self-reliance and that is why many of us became wilderness advocates to begin with. Anyone who has pooped in a hole or carried food and supplies for a long trip on their back is not in a lather over toilet paper shortages or the prospect of living on pasta for awhile. The larger question is how the lessons learned from the coronavirus about our interconnectedness, the security in vibrant local economies and communities, and the economic power of the majority on the bottom will shape our choices going forward. In many ways, it's a hard time to feel hopeful about the future, but this fascinating opportunity for evolution gives me hope.

I find hope in one other thing too. Wilderness Watch just topped 2,700 members. I am thrilled to learn that so many like-minded people are supporting the work of this fine organization fighting for Wilderness, wild places, and wildness, even in the midst of a pandemic. Thank you all. 🐾

Talasi Brooks is a Staff Attorney with Western Watersheds Project and has served on the Board of Directors of Wilderness Watch since 2014.



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Keeping Wilderness Wild

The *Wilderness Watcher* is the quarterly newsletter of Wilderness Watch, America's leading conservation organization dedicated solely to protecting the lands and waters in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

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Wilderness Watch

P.O. Box 9175
Missoula, MT 59807
Phone: (406) 542-2048
www.wildernesswatch.org
wild@wildernesswatch.org

Livestock Grazing (continued from page 1)

areas that currently have no livestock grazing in them, but which potentially could at any time.

Problems

Livestock grazing will always be incompatible with Wilderness. Wilderness Act author Howard Zahniser recognized this incompatibility as early as 1953 when he stated, "Grazing by domestic livestock is a commodity use that is a threat to wilderness areas in the national forests, where it should be excluded as soon as this can be equitably accomplished." Wilderness Watch and partners like Yellowstone to Uintas Connection, Grazing Reform Project, Western Watersheds Project, and others are currently looking at a number of areas where Wilderness values are being significantly compromised by grazing and related management:

- **Displacement and death of native wildlife.** The High Uintas Wilderness in Utah consists of nearly 454,000 acres of superlative mountain country and some of the best Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep habitat in the central Rockies. But approximately 150,000 acres of this Wilderness are grazed by 15,000 domestic sheep, and another 100,000 acres are grazed by cattle. The U.S. Forest Service is analyzing the impacts of disease transmission from domestic sheep to wild bighorn sheep. Bighorns, reintroduced just outside the Wilderness in 1989, are struggling.
- **Trampling of streamside/riparian vegetation.** In the 225,000-acre Marble Mountain Wilderness in northern California, cattle graze about 61,000 acres in nine allotments. The cattle, including some that freely trespass from outside, hammer the streamside riparian vegetation, trample and desiccate wetlands and dry meadows alike, eradicate willow cover in meadows and along streams, and, in Back Meadow, cover about 12 percent of the soil surface with manure that fouls the waterways.
- **Degraded water quality.** The 537,000-acre Trinity Alps Wilderness in northern California has 53,000 acres grazed by cattle in five allotments. An additional seven allotments, totaling another 43,000 acres, are currently vacant. Cattle extensively trample the streambanks. The streambank trampling and resulting loss of riparian shade directly violate the Scott River Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation Plan for water quality. Bacteriological pollution and erosion/sedimentation also degrade water quality.
- **Killing of predators.** In and around the Gros Ventre and Bridger Wildernesses in Wyoming, in the southern part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, the U.S. Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service have authorized the legal killing of up to 72 grizzly bears on the 170,641 acres of the Upper Green River Allotments in order to protect private ranchers' cows from grizzly predation. The grizzly bear is far from recovered in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, and is listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act in the Lower 48.
- **Motor vehicle and motorized equipment use.** In the 75,479-acre Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness in Colorado, the BLM has authorized an allotment rancher to drive

around in the Wilderness for very routine herding and livestock management simply for the rancher's convenience.

- **Maintenance of grazing structures and installations.** In another Wilderness in Colorado, the 62,742-acre Powderhorn Wilderness, BLM has authorized a rancher to drive a Utility Transport Vehicle (UTV) for carrying fencing material into the Wilderness. BLM has also authorized a rancher to use chainsaws to cut out up to 15 miles of "cattle movement corridors" and to build a road into the Wilderness so a mini-excavator can drive in to periodically clean out an existing stock pond.

Solutions

Wilderness Watch is proposing a number of solutions to address these and other problems caused by livestock grazing in Wilderness. These include:

- **Revise the CCGs.** Wilderness Watch has drafted language to clarify and tighten the language in the CCGs. The revised language, among other things, would direct the federal agencies to limit motorized uses only to true emergencies.
- **Pass the Voluntary Grazing Permit Retirement Act (VGPR).** The VGPR, HR 5737, was introduced by Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA). This bill would provide federal public lands commercial grazing permit holders the option to relinquish their commercial grazing permits. This could involve compensation paid by private parties. The managing federal agency would then be directed to permanently retire the associated commercial grazing allotment from any further commercial livestock grazing activity. This bill has the potential to begin eliminating the harmful effects of livestock grazing within designated Wildernesses as well as on other federal public lands. WW members and supporters have sent Congress nearly 40,000 messages in support of VGPR.
- **Challenge individual allotment renewals.** Wilderness Watch and partner organizations have challenged individual grazing allotment renewals in two Wildernesses in Colorado, the Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness and the Powderhorn Wilderness. Both areas are administered by the BLM.
- **Permanently close vacant allotments in Wilderness.** Wilderness Watch is promoting the permanent closure of the currently vacant allotments in Wilderness. In the Golden Trout Wilderness in California, for example, two vacant allotments formerly utilized by what was then the Anheuser-Busch beer company have been vacant for some years. Those allotment areas have begun to recover, but ranchers from adjacent allotments are hoping to utilize these vacant allotments for their own livestock.

Wilderness Watch will continue to fight to protect our precious Wildernesses from the negative impacts of livestock grazing. 🐾

Kevin Proescholdt is the conservation director for Wilderness Watch.

On the Watch

Proposed BLM grazing regulations threaten Wilderness across the West

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) proposed changes to livestock grazing regulations could negatively impact nearly 5 million acres of Wilderness across the West, including the habitat for numerous imperiled species.

In our comments, we noted some of the troubling aspects of the proposed changes, including:

- Instead of complying with existing regulations to document violations and assess penalties, BLM could adopt new regulations for informally addressing unauthorized grazing and will likely come up with a way of hiding grazing trespass or overuse.
- The BLM wants to expand the use of categorical exclusions, rather than complete full environmental analyses for grazing permits.
- A proposed streamlined protests and appeal process would reduce timelines for public involvement, increase or codify exhaustion requirements, and further limit public involvement in livestock grazing decisions.
- Land Health Standards are not being met on many grazing allotments throughout the West, and the BLM plans to do away with the requirement rather than have ranchers meet the standards as part of the permit renewal process.
- The BLM is expediting livestock grazing authorizations under the false narrative of grazing as “a tool to reduce wildfire” or to “improve rangeland conditions” when the science shows the opposite is true in almost all cases. 🐾

WW appeals Wilderness livestock grazing permit renewals in Colorado

As we mentioned in the cover story, Wilderness Watch has formally appealed the renewal of two 10-year livestock grazing permits in western Colorado where the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is abandoning its wilderness protection responsibilities and choosing cows over Wilderness, violating the law, and ignoring its own obligations to the public. In both instances, BLM has authorized motor vehicle use and motorized equipment use well beyond what is allowed by the various federal laws, guidelines, and regulations.

In the Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness, BLM authorized motorized access to “check on livestock to avoid or detect emergencies,” haul camp supplies to support the annual gather, and place salt. Wilderness Watch monitors Wildernesses all over the country and to our knowledge this is the only place motor vehicles are allowed for such routine livestock management practices. BLM refused to consider commonplace nonmotorized alternatives.

In the Powderhorn Wilderness, BLM went so far as to allow extensive chainsaw use to cut out 15 miles of “cattle movement corridors” inside the Wilderness, develop a foot trail into a road to allow motor vehicle access, authorize the use of a mini-excavator to periodically clean out a stock pond, and permit the use of Utility Transport Vehicles (UTVs) to drive into the Wilderness with fencing material. BLM provided no analysis of nonmotorized alternatives, but merely rubber-stamped the rancher's request. 🐾

National Environmental Policy Act on the line

The Trump administration's proposed changes to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) would dismantle NEPA as we know it—by allowing more resource exploitation and environmental damage on our public lands with little regard to Wilderness, imperiled plants and wildlife, clean water, and clean air. The proposed new rule creates loopholes for the federal government to ignore public comment, even though NEPA is the only law that gives the public a voice in federal decision making.

Under the proposed changes, the federal land management agencies will no longer need to consider an area's “unique characteristics” (which courts have interpreted to include Wilderness designation) when determining whether an Environmental Impact Statement is necessary, essentially allowing agencies to disregard the special status of Wilderness.

Wilderness Watch has relied on NEPA to defend Wilderness from predator control, motor vehicle use, helicopters, grazing developments, and new mining and roads. 🐾

On the Watch (continued)

Boundary Waters mines in the courts



Kevin Proescholdt

The two new proposed copper-nickel sulfide mines near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in northeastern Minnesota are tied up in the courts. For **PolyMet**'s proposed mine, the Minnesota Court of Appeals has blocked the all-important Permit to Mine and Dam Safety Permit, while the same court has also required a new evidentiary hearing on the Water Quality Permit. For the **Twin Metals** mine, a Trump-appointed federal judge ruled against environmental interests as expected on whether the two expired federal exploration and mining permits were illegally renewed; that decision was recently appealed to the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, where we expect a more balanced reception. In early May, another lawsuit was filed challenging the lack of any environmental review for those two federal permits. ♪

Okefenokee Wilderness threatened by proposed strip mine again



US Fish and Wildlife Service

The Okefenokee Wilderness, part of one of the world's largest still intact blackwater swamp ecosystems and important habitat for native wildlife such as black bears, American alligators, and red-cockaded woodpeckers, is once again threatened by a titanium and zirconium mine at the doorstep of its namesake national wildlife refuge (NWR). The 354,000-acre Okefenokee Wilderness in southern Georgia makes up almost 90 percent of the Okefenokee NWR and is one of the largest Wilderness areas in the East.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers told Twin Pine Minerals of Birmingham, Alabama that a full environmental impact statement (EIS) would be required to evaluate the adverse impacts of its proposed 12,000-acre mine on the Okefenokee's eastern edge, and Twin Pines withdrew its application in February 2020. Twin Pines has since resubmitted an application for the first phase of the mine as a "demonstration project"

spanning 898 acres in the hopes of avoiding the scientific scrutiny and public comments that go with a full-blown EIS. We'll continue to pressure the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to reject Twin Pines Minerals' ill-advised mine. ♪

Forest Plan needs to protect Selway-Bitterroot and River of No Return



Friends of the Clearwater

WW is urging the Forest Service (FS) to protect some of our least developed and most ecologically significant public lands in the lower 48 states as the agency proposes a weaker forest management plan for the 4 million-acre Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest (NPCNF) in Idaho. The NPCNF is part of the largest Wilderness complex in the lower 48.

Some of our concerns include:

- The FS is doing nothing about addressing the impacts of growing visitor use in Wilderness, which has increased more than three-fold in just five years. As more roadless acres become motorized playgrounds and clearcuts, Wilderness could see more increases in visitor use.
- The FS is hell-bent on interfering with natural processes through extensive use of manager-ignited fire.
- The Selway-Bitterroot/River of No Return Wilderness Complex is a primary recovery area for grizzly bears, yet the draft forest plan barely mentions grizzly bears, much less discusses essential migration corridors and the habitat security necessary for their recovery. ♪

Wilderness in Congress

With the House of Representatives under the control of more wilderness-friendly Democratic hands, more action on wilderness bills has occurred there than in the Senate. Several wilderness or wilderness-related bills in Congress deserve mention. These bills include:

- **Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain.** In March, Rep. Jared Huffman (D-CA) introduced HR 5999, the Udall-Eisenhower Arctic Wilderness Act. This bill would designate the 1.5 million-acre coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska as Wilderness. Sen. Edward Markey (D-MA) had earlier introduced the companion bill in the Senate, S. 2461. These wilderness designation bills are different from Rep. Huffman's HR 1146, the bill that would repeal the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil and gas drilling program in the tax cut law. HR 1146 passed the full House of Representatives in September 2019.
- **Voluntary Grazing Permit Retirement Act (VGPPRA).** Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA) introduced the VGPPRA (HR 5737) in February. This bill would provide federal public lands commercial grazing permit holders the option to relinquish their commercial grazing permits in exchange for market-based compensation paid by private parties. The managing federal agency would then permanently retire the associated commercial grazing allotment from any future commercial livestock grazing. This bill has the potential to begin eliminating the harmful effects of livestock grazing within designated Wildernesses as well as on other federal public lands.
- **Malheur Community Empowerment for the Owyhee Act.** Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) introduced this bill, S. 2828, in November 2019. While this bill would designate 30 Wildernesses totaling 1,133,481 acres on Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-administered land in Malheur County, Oregon, the bill also contains many bad special provisions for Wilderness related to fire pre-suppression, invasive species management, livestock structure maintenance guidelines, and setbacks for roads adjacent to Wildernesses. The bill also releases Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) for development, and contains many other giveaways to ranchers.
- **Colorado Wilderness Act.** Rep. Diane DeGette (D-CO) passed this bill, HR 2546, through the full House of Representatives in February. Her bill would designate 13 new Wildernesses on 263,994 acres of BLM-administered land in Colorado, plus 20 Wilderness additions totaling 477,613 acres on mostly BLM-administered land. The bill also designated two potential Wildernesses totaling 35,280 acres. Unfortunately her bill also contains bad special provisions on allowing permanent fixed climbing anchors in Wilderness, bad language on buffer zones and military overflights, and allows inappropriate competitive running events to continue in two Wildernesses.
- **Desert National Wildlife Refuge.** These bills (S. 3145/HR 5606) would give the military 98,000 acres of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge in Nevada to be incorporated into the Nevada Test and Training Range, in exchange for designating eight Wildernesses totaling 1.31 million acres elsewhere on the Refuge. Unfortunately the bills also include bad special provisions dealing with buffer zones, military overflights, and guzzlers and other wildlife water installations. Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) and Rep. Steven Horsford (D-NV) are the sponsors of these bills. ♪

The Passing of a Wilderness Legal Champion

Brian B. O'Neill, 72, died at his Minnesota home on May 6 from ALS. He was one of the nation's top environmental attorneys. During his years at the Faegre and Benson law firm in Minneapolis, he built a powerhouse litigation group focused on pro bono environmental law, and mentored dozens of young attorneys into top-notch environmental litigators. A brilliant attorney himself, Brian focused much of his environmental work on protecting wolves, wildlife, and wilderness, especially the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Minnesota. Brian, and Faegre and Benson, represented Wilderness Watch on numerous cases over the years, including the outfitter cache issue in Idaho that gave rise to Wilderness Watch more than 30 years ago, and the Cumberland Island Wilderness issue that successfully ended motorized van tours through this Wilderness. Brian also represented Alaskan fishermen and fisherwomen impacted by the 1989

Exxon Valdez oil spill, winning an initial judgment of \$5.3 billion against the oil industry giant. A force of nature, and a force for nature, Brian will be deeply missed. ♪



Brian O'Neill and his wife Ruth O'Neill

Wilderness in the Courts

Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Ruling Protects River of No Return Wilderness, ID In 2017, a judge ruled that the Forest Service illegally authorized Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) to conduct 120 helicopter landings in the Frank Church–River of No Return Wilderness to radio collar elk—an action IDFG said was necessary to study elk populations after wolves returned to the Wilderness. Wilderness Watch and allies filed suit hours after the project was authorized. But, within the next three days, before we could get before the judge, IDFG inundated the Wilderness with repeated helicopter flights and landings. And, IDFG—an agency with an unapologetic history of wolf extermination efforts—captured and collared four wolves without authorization.

The judge ordered IDFG to destroy data from the collars, forbade the agencies from using that data to support future project proposals, and ordered a 90-day implementation delay of future helicopter projects to allow time for legal challenges. The agencies appealed this ruling, conceding they violated the law but arguing the judge didn't have jurisdiction to hear the case because the project was already completed and that the injunction terms were too harsh.

This March, a Ninth Circuit opinion largely upheld the lower Court's order but narrowed the injunction. It reduced the 90-day implementation delay to 30 days, and held IDFG does not need to destroy the data it obtained illegally, but the Forest Service cannot consider it as a basis for future projects in the Wilderness. Importantly, the Circuit flatly rejected the argument that the agencies could evade judicial review by rushing to complete the project before the judge could rule. While this ruling will make it more difficult for the agencies to avoid judicial review of similar future projects, we know IDFG's relentless focus on killing wolves isn't over, and they've got their eyes set on the River of No Return Wilderness. We're watching and ready to head to the courtroom again to protect this spectacular place. 🐾

The Never-ending Battle Over Road Construction in the Izembek Wilderness, AK In 2019, we started a third round of litigation challenging the construction of a road through the heart of the Izembek Wilderness, a remote ecological treasure where a quarter-million migratory birds—including nearly every Pacific black brant, Emperor goose, and Steller's Eider in the world—congregate each fall. Izembek's natural diversity and wildness is protected in large part because of its seclusion and lack of surrounding development.

But, for decades, a battle to blaze a 12-mile road right through the center of Izembek has persistently waged. Previously, a court upheld then-Interior Secretary Sally Jewell's decision to forgo this road construction due to "significant degradation of irreplaceable ecological resources"—including the migration route for 7,000 caribou—and because transportation alternatives are available. However, with a new administration, Interior did an about-face and ushered through a closed-door land exchange to facilitate the construction. We challenged that exchange in federal

court and won. Interior then sealed *another* closed-door land exchange to push construction through. So, we sued again. Briefing is fully submitted, and we are optimistic about another favorable ruling. 🐾

Predator Killing in Wildernesses, AK The State of Alaska, Safari Club International, and Alaska Professional Hunters Association all sued to invalidate federal rules promulgated by the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Park Service (NPS) in 2015 to protect predators in National Wildlife Refuges, National Preserves, and Wildernesses from Alaska's "intensive management" law. The State's law allowed barbaric hunting methods such as killing bear cubs, wolf pups, and their mothers in dens, and shooting grizzlies from helicopters. We intervened in all three lawsuits to defend the protective federal rules, but the litigation has been on hold since 2018 pending the Trump administration's release of rollback rules that would rescind the more protective regulations from 2015. Fortunately, the 2015 regulations remain in effect while the administration's new rulemaking process plays out.

Recently, after multiple delays by the Trump administration in finalizing new rules, the court lifted the stay on litigation over the 2015 rules. Briefing should be finalized this summer. 🐾

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Thank you!



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View From the Top of the Mountain

By Jeff Smith



"... it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness."

That first sentence of the Wilderness Act is our guiding star. It's what we see when we get to the top of the mountain.

In recent days, I've witnessed hundreds of our members and friends rallying to this cause.

I didn't really expect an outpouring of support at the beginning of May when Wilderness Watch participated in a local fundraising event called *Missoula Gives* on May 1 and then a "global day of giving" called *GivingTuesdayNow* on May 5.

Hundreds of members and friends rallied to support us as the Trump administration moved, under the cover of the COVID-19 news coverage, to strip protections from Wilderness and other public lands. Donations came rolling in, in spite of our recent economic downturn and the uncertainties of the coronavirus pandemic. I literally spent days welcoming first-time donors and sending thank-you notes to our members.

It was joyful work. Each donation strengthens our collective voice and builds on the momentum started many years ago in the very first paragraph of the Wilderness Act:

"... [wilderness areas] shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness." ♪