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## New Analysis Shows Exactly How the Utah Public Lands Initiative Act Guts Wilderness Protections

*Legislation by Utah Republican Reps Bishop and Chaffetz contains numerous unprecedented measures that weaken wilderness protection*

MISSOULA, MONTANA – Wilderness Watch has released a new, detailed analysis of the Wilderness provisions found in the “Utah Public Lands Initiative Act” (H.R. 5780), which was introduced in Congress on July 14, 2016 by Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) and Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT).

Wilderness Watch’s full analysis is here: <http://bit.ly/UT-PLI>

“Despite designating 41 Wilderness areas in seven counties, H.R. 5780 contains numerous special provisions that depart from the Wilderness Act and severely compromise the protections that would normally be afforded to areas designated as Wilderness,” explained George Nickas, executive director of Wilderness Watch and a long-time Utah wilderness advocate.

The analysis points to provisions making livestock grazing the dominant use of the Wildernesses, despite its impacts to wildlife, watersheds, or recreation values as well as provisions requiring the federal government to maintain ranchers’ fence lines and trails as just two examples of destructive provisions never before included in a wilderness bill. H.R. 5780 also includes provisions on wildlife management, motorized access, buffer zones, military overflights, and wildlife water development projects (“guzzlers” and dams) that would weaken wilderness protections and harm wilderness values.

“The sheer number and types of special provisions in H.R. 5780 are unprecedented and ensure the Wildernesses designed by the PLI would lack

many of the protections afforded by the Wilderness Act. They would become what are referred to as WINOs—Wilderness In Name Only,” added Nickas.

“Some of those provisions have appeared previously in other Wilderness bills, but H.R. 5780 seems to take nearly every bad idea of the last 30 years as well as some new ones and combine them into one colossally bad bill,” said Kevin Proescholdt, Wilderness Watch’s conservation director.

“We should protect real, wild, authentic Wilderness in Utah,” added Proescholdt. “We shouldn’t be designating fake Wildernesses that rob the citizens of Utah and the nation of the real thing.”

“Unfortunately, the PLI mandates so many incompatible uses, and so compromises wilderness values, that in many ways the areas designated as Wilderness by the PLI can be better protected now with the status quo than if the PLI were to pass. There’s really nothing in this bill for those who love the wild,” Proescholdt concluded.

Wilderness Watch’s analysis also points out that H.R. 5780 also warrants concern with regard to where Wilderness boundaries are drawn, the size of proposed Wildernesses, cherry-stem boundaries that fragment the proposed areas and compromise their remoteness for humans and wildlife, the release of several wilderness study areas, and the potential for innumerable roads to penetrate or dissect the wildlands surrounding the Wildernesses as a result of RS-2477 claims. These concerns deserve much attention in the ensuing debate over H.R. 5780, but are not a part of Wilderness Watch’s analysis.

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*Wilderness Watch is a national wilderness conservation organization with offices in Missoula (MT), Moscow (ID), and Minneapolis (MN). The organization focuses on the protection and proper stewardship of Wildernesses in the National Wilderness Preservation System, and has developed extensive expertise with the implementation of the 1964 Wilderness Act. See [www.wildernesswatch.org](http://www.wildernesswatch.org).*