

Conflating recreation with conservation is not Wilderness preservation

By Mason Parker and Katie Bilodeau

In the final hours of the 118th Congress, the Senate took up and passed the EXPLORE Act, which former President Biden signed into law on January 6. Some of our members reached out, confused after seeing other conservation nonprofits urging support for this bill, even as Wilderness Watch opposed it. News articles covering the EXPLORE Act suggested it could be a blueprint for conservation moving forward. But the EXPLORE Act has stirred fundamental questions about conservation, specifically, whether public lands like Wilderness should be protected for their own intrinsic value, or if their value lies solely in what we can extract from them.

As Howard Zahniser, author of the Wilderness Act, said, “The purpose of the Wilderness Act is to preserve the wilderness character of the areas to be included in the wilderness system, not to establish any particular use.” Wilderness is a priceless place to recreate—it provides us solitude, a chance for reflection, and an opportunity to experience a world we don’t manipulate and control. But, as John Muir once said, “Nothing dollarable is safe.” This includes Wilderness.

Consumptive activities include mining, logging, grazing, drilling, and, yes, recreating. While logging litters stumps and slash piles across clearcuts, and mining strips away soil,

recreation consumes the space and security of plants and animals. Recreation can destroy habitat, and displace or habituate wildlife. Human presence can drive wildlife to ecologically inferior habitats where food may be in short supply and predator risk is higher. It can also physiologically stress animals, making them more susceptible to disease. High-use and concentrated recreation areas, such as climbing spots, can decrease the nesting

success of birds. To top it off, recreation contributes to the introduction and spread of invasive species. These pressures influence whether individual animals produce offspring, affecting broader population levels. For these reasons, we must consider limits and restraint on our recreation impacts.

Some conservation groups supported the EXPLORE Act because of provisions aimed at expanding access to public lands, especially for broader socioeconomic groups. While that’s a worthy goal, the bill gives the National Park Service discretion to install cell towers in backcountry throughout the National Park system, including within



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WILDERNESS WATCH
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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Message from Howie Wolke, Wilderness Watch board member



I'll cut right to the chase. The Trump administration and the 119th Congress will not be kind to wild nature, though things have not been great for the wild for some time. From "Drill baby drill" to climate denial to assaults on Wilderness areas, national monuments, and public land roadless areas, we face yet another historic challenge to conservation. I say "another" because the current situation isn't new; we've been here before. We survived James Watt and Trump 1. The good news is that determined efforts to stave off the worst of our society's anti-wilderness impulses often succeed.

That's partly because Wilderness, national parks, and public lands are among our nation's best ideas, ever. Make no mistake, wild nature will take some damaging blows during the next few years. It won't be pretty. Nevertheless, Wilderness and the wilderness idea will persist. And efforts to keep Wilderness wild will usually prevail simply because we at Wilderness Watch are determined. Also, great ideas usually outlive their detractors.

Wilderness is often in the anti-environmental crosshairs because it represents a radical departure from humanity's insatiable appetite to convert nature into human biomass and its ever-expanding global footprint. For example, over half of our nation's wetlands are gone, and once expansive biomes such as the tallgrass prairie have been nearly obliterated. And get this: about 60 percent of today's global terrestrial mammal biomass is livestock, 36 percent is humanity, and just 4 percent is wildlife!

As you can see elsewhere in this issue, efforts to de-wild Wilderness continue to challenge Wilderness Watch—from the EXPLORE Act's effort to weaken the Wilderness Act to the Izembek road threat to Forest Service efforts to trammel Wilderness in Sequoia and Sierra National Forests...and so much more. But we shall persevere in the quest to keep Wilderness wild.

Not only do great ideas outlive their detractors, but I've long believed that conservation has a wildcard up its sleeve that it has thus far ignored. Despite the anti-environmental fanaticism displayed by many elected officials, that attitude isn't shared by many of the folks who elect them. In other words, many conservatives vote for people like Trump or Utah Senator Mike Lee for reasons that have nothing to do with protecting or exploiting wildlands and wildlife. Let's face it. The term "polarization" understates the vitriol routinely spewed by political opponents at one another, often over various issues not directly related to the environment that when viewed in the context of today's global biological meltdown, appear metaphorically similar to arguing about the arrangement of deck chairs on the Titanic—while it's full speed ahead and icebergs be damned!

Despite polarization, I am convinced—and polls confirm—that there's much more support for protecting Wilderness and related public wildlands than election results suggest. It is a mistake for conservation to jump into bed with one political party while writing off the other as hopeless. Sure, Trump and other anti-conservation extremists are hopeless. But the rank and file include plenty of political conservatives who love nature and are potential allies for Wilderness and conservation in general. The conservation movement would do well to utilize these difficult times as an opportunity to educate Americans on the importance of protecting and restoring wild nature, and to utilize our wildcard by increasing efforts to cultivate and organize Wilderness support among all Americans, including political conservatives. Conservatism isn't going away. Conservation will advance when it's perceived as the bipartisan imperative that it's always been—despite some of our elected "Drill baby drill" zealots. It must become difficult for politicians to ignore their conservationist constituents. Otherwise, it'll continue to be one step forward and two steps back each time the reins of power change hands. 🐾

Howie Wolke is a retired wilderness guide/outfitter who has been on the Wilderness Watch board of Directors for much of the last two decades. He lives in southern Montana, just north of Yellowstone.

designated, potential, recommended, or eligible Wilderness. The EXPLORE Act also increases mechanized and motorized access on public lands; upgrades cabins, campgrounds, and resorts; loosens restrictions on commercial filming; and reduces the public's ability to review outfitter impacts to wild places on all public lands, including Wilderness.

Alarming, the EXPLORE Act makes the first ever exception for a nonconforming recreation activity in Wilderness by allowing climbers to hammer fixed anchors into rock faces. Wilderness cliffs of gneiss and quartzite, limestone and slate, once untarnished by evidence of recreation, can now bear permanent proof of human presence. Moreover, the installation of permanent, fixed anchors will inevitably draw more climbers to what were once quiet wilderness cliffs.

Politicians driving the EXPLORE Act didn't attempt to veil its purpose. Bringing the bill to the floor for a vote, Senator Joe Manchin—who caucused with the Democrats—said, “We have made a focus of supporting our public lands and the outdoor recreation economy, which is the fastest growing element of our economy in every state.” His Republican colleague, Senator John Barasso, said, “It is a first-of-its-kind recreation package, and it will boost our nation's outdoor economy... Outdoor recreation added over \$1 trillion to our national economy in 2023—\$1.2 trillion. That is 2.3 percent of our entire gross domestic product... This is a big deal.”

Yes, this is a big deal, but one where humans aren't paying the price. Dwindling populations of flora and fauna foot the bill through increasing habitat destruction and biodiversity loss. And contrary to Senator Barasso's claims, the EXPLORE Act is not “a first-of-its-kind recreation package.” It's only the latest in a long line of bipartisan legislation that has conflated recreation with conservation—slowly chipping away at protections for the wild. Before the EXPLORE Act it was the 2023 Outdoor Recreation Act. Before that was the 2019 John Dingell Act. Maybe next year we'll be fighting the Wealth and Income Landscape Development Act—the WILD Act—because America's leaders can't resist a quippy acronym when weakening environmental protections for profit.

By design, the EXPLORE Act is human-centered and extractive—what can nature do for us? But anthropocentric utility was never the reason for protecting Wilderness. This reality is at the core of why Wilderness Watch and our members—who sent thousands of messages to Congress—so strongly opposed the bill. Conflating recreation with conservation causes untold harm to the wild. Perhaps this conflation is based on the myth that recreationists are, by default, conservationists—though there is little evidence linking these qualities, and emerging research suggests the opposite. Anecdotally, we've just observed a vocal subset of the climbing community lobby for recreation over preserving Wilderness. More so than individuals, however, capitalism fuels this conflation.

In an economic system where industry is controlled by private ownership, where self-interests and me-firsts feature prominently, and where gains are measured in dollars, it's not surprising that the common value assigned to public lands extends only so far as who can profit from them. The bipartisan introduction the EXPLORE Act received on the Senate floor wasn't rooted in equity—it was rooted in money that the recreation industry can generate if turned loose on public lands. Even if recreationists are the foot soldiers, at the end of the day, those who provide goods and services will profit the most from the EXPLORE Act. It's certainly not groups of veterans or disadvantaged youth who profit financially from constructing cell phone towers, modernizing cabins, or selling bikes, climbing hardware, and ATVs.

With less than 3 percent of the Lower 48 designated as Wilderness, does capitalism not consume enough space already? If you drive through the endless agricultural development of the midwest—essentially clearcuts of the native prairie—you become acutely aware of how much “progress” has shaped and terraformed our corner of the planet. In the urban sprawl of American cities and their suburbs, you have to wonder if there is any space we don't feel entitled to, despite the history of overconsumption and ecological destruction that feeds civilization. Or, perhaps we're suffering from a collective cultural amnesia—we've forgotten that these places used to be wild and can't imagine what they once were like.

Upon witnessing how rapidly industrialization was chewing through the wild over a half-century ago, a few visionary women and men—with the help of an overwhelming majority of Congress—laid the groundwork for a more ecologically ethical future. In the Wilderness Act, they developed a new idea to counter the threat of expanding settlement and growing mechanization. That new idea was Wilderness, and Wilderness offered something invaluable in the face of unprecedented and unrelenting development—it offered domains of respite for the natural world.

Conflating recreation with conservation completely fails to preserve Wilderness. A mountain goat and her kids crossing the steep terrain of the Northern Rockies, as goats have done for eight million years, will never generate profit like the climbing industry. The wilderness idea means protecting the intrinsic value of Wilderness and all of the life it safeguards, regardless of utility to humans or profit capacity. While recreation was always meant to be a part of Wilderness, elevating it to an all-consuming priority will trammel the natural world. Only when we step back and allow space for the more-than-human will we see the wilderness idea fully realized. 🌿

Mason is Wilderness Watch's Wilderness defense director, and Katie is Wilderness Watch's legislative director/policy analyst.

On the watch

Lusk Creek—Wilderness or ORV playground?

Wilderness Watch and Heartwood are pushing back against a U.S. Forest Service (FS) plan to reconstruct, and in places construct, a road in the Lusk Creek Wilderness in Illinois. At issue is access across Wilderness to 87 acres of private land that borders the eastern side of the Wilderness, which only a handful of owners have been permitted motorized access to since the area's 1990 wilderness designation.

The FS proposed a categorical exclusion (CE) that exempts review under the National Environmental Policy Act.

This CE is problematic for several reasons. Based on limited information the agency provided the public, the number of special-permit users accessing these 87 acres seems to have exponentially grown. Some users also have created their own off-road vehicle (ORV) routes to their property, and the Forest Service

has proposed road construction for some of these illegal user-created routes. Finally, when Lusk Creek was designated as Wilderness, the entry gate to this route had been locked with keys for the special-permit users. Through either the fault of the Forest Service or the permit users, this gate has been open for years, during which motorized users have created a network of illegal roads in the Wilderness. The motorized abuse that has gone unchecked makes the Lusk Creek Wilderness look like an ORV playground, as observed by Wilderness Watch and Heartwood members who visited last fall, and who documented washed-out roads, extensive erosion, and other damage to the Wilderness.

Our joint comments urged the agency to drop its road construction plan. The Forest Service needs to protect the Lusk Creek Wilderness by closing the existing access road in the Wilderness and directing private land access through

non-Wilderness land or evaluating the feasibility of purchasing the 87 acres to add to the Shawnee National Forest.

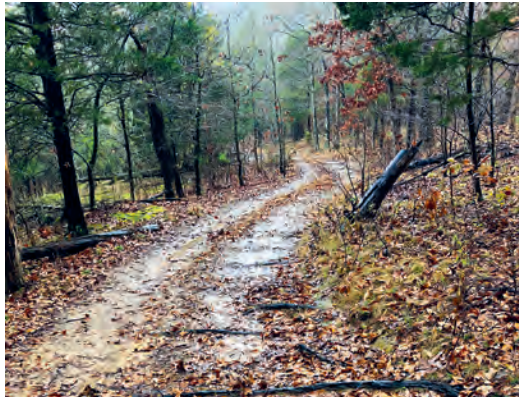
Unfortunately, in early January the agency decided to approve the road-building plan without any environmental review. Wilderness Watch is evaluating our next steps. 🌿

Wildernesses across two National Forests threatened with burning

The U.S. Forest Service is proposing a massive burning project in California called the "Sequoia and Sierra National Forests Prescribed Fire Project." The project area includes all 842,000 acres of Wilderness on the forests. The Forest Service proposes burning up to 82,000 acres per year on the forests' 2.4 million acres for an indefinite time period. The agency is also considering the unlawful use of chainsaws, helicopters, drones, and more.

This is the largest intervention/manipulation project ever proposed for Wilderness, and would be one of the most

profound violations of the Wilderness Act in the law's 60-year history. Some of America's most loved Wilderness areas are at stake—the Ansel Adams, Dinkey Lakes, John Muir, Kaiser, Kiavah, Monarch, South Sierra, Dome Land, Jennie Lakes, and Golden Trout. Also very problematic is the proposal's lack of any site-specific analysis on which areas it would cut and burn, a clear violation of the National Environmental Policy Act.



Top: Access road in the Lusk Creek Wilderness by John B. Wallace

Bottom: Lusk Creek—a Wild and Scenic River candidate by Karen Frailey

Natural, lightning-caused fire plays an important ecological role in these Wildernesses, but torching Wilderness, as proposed here, is entirely inconsistent with the letter and spirit of the Wilderness Act. From a wilderness perspective, managers should allow natural, lightning-caused fire to shape Wilderness, rather than ignite forests in an attempt to create their desired conditions.

Wilderness Watch is urging the Forest Service to exclude all Wilderness and Recommended Wilderness Areas in the two national forests from this extensive burning and habitat manipulation project. 🌿

On the watch

Burning proposed for the Boundary Waters

Wilderness Watch is urging the U.S. Forest Service to drop its massive manipulation project that would set fire to as many as 84,000 acres of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) in Minnesota. The misguided *Fernberg Corridor Landscape Management Project* has no place in Wilderness and would violate the mandate of the 1964 Wilderness Act to preserve the area's wilderness character. In addition, the project could include using helicopters and chainsaws, another violation of the letter and spirit of the law.

The 1.1-million-acre BWCAW is the largest Wilderness east of the Rockies and north of the Everglades. It has over 1,000 lakes, connected by portage trails, rivers, and streams, and stretches for almost 150 miles along the international border. Its 150,000 yearly visitors make it one of the most visited Wildernesses.

Fernberg Road ends at Lake One, and the BWCAW surrounds the Fernberg Corridor on three sides, with homes, cabins, and developments within the corridor.

While Wilderness Watch supports restoring fire to its natural role in the BWCAW ecosystem, this project goes about it in the absolute wrong way. The Forest Service has promised since the 1980s that it will allow lightning-caused

fires to play their natural role in the BWCAW, but with very few exceptions, has continued to put out nearly all natural fires in the Wilderness over the past 40 years. And while the agency claims that one of the project's purposes is to allow natural fires to burn in the BWCAW, the draft EA has no analysis about whether, when, or how the agency will allow natural fires to burn if the proposed action occurs.

Manager-ignited fires can have very different effects on a wilderness ecosystem than natural, lightning-caused fires. The ignition location and forest types that managers burn are often different, and the fire type can be very different, too. Managers usually avoid burning under conditions that can cause stand-replacement crown fires, which historically happened in the BWCAW, and prefer lower-intensity ground fires that primarily clear brush and burn shorter ladder fuels. Those

different kinds of fires can cause widely divergent effects on the wilderness landscape. And from a wilderness perspective, manager-ignited fires are a prime example of humans imposing their will on Wilderness to try to create managers' desired conditions rather than allowing nature to shape the area.

Instead of proposing to burn thousands of acres in the BWCAW, the Forest Service should allow natural lightning-caused fires to play their role in the Wilderness. Wilderness Watch is urging the agency to adopt Alternative 3, the *No Action in the Wilderness Alternative*. 🌿

Feds must stop killing predators in Wilderness

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services, which kills tens of thousands of native animals annually—much at the request of the livestock industry and including within Wilderness—recently released a

decision on its *Predator Damage Management in Idaho*. The decision prohibits aerial gunning of wildlife in Wilderness, but unfortunately allows aerial gunning to continue in Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). It also allows coyotes, wolves, cougars, and bears to continue to be killed in Wilderness and WSAs through trapping, snaring, chasing by dogs, and calling.

Bears, wolves, coyotes, cougars, and other native predators are an integral part of what

makes Wilderness and WSAs truly wild and ecologically healthy. Nature should be allowed to shape these wild places, and natural predator and prey dynamics should determine wildlife populations and distribution.

During the public comment period, Wilderness Watch urged Wildlife Services to stop killing wildlife in all Wilderness and WSAs in Idaho. We advocated that all Wildlife Services program activity in Wilderness and WSAs in Idaho be nonlethal and meet the letter and intent of the Wilderness Act. Additionally, Wildlife Services should have extended the prohibition on aerial gunning in Wilderness to all lands, including WSAs. Wilderness Watch is weighing our options for further action. 🌿



Black bear by Sam Parks

On the watch

Habitat protection on the Flathead can't wait

Wilderness Watch is urging the Forest Service to strengthen protections for the 219-mile Flathead Wild and Scenic River System as the agency considers new regulations and increased recreation monitoring. In warm months, the Flathead is flooded with anglers and floaters, many with guides and outfitters.

Roughly 87 river miles run through the gorges and valleys of the 1.5-million-acre Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, made up of the Bob Marshall, Scapegoat, and Great Bear Wildernesses in Montana. All native wildlife—including iconic native species like grizzlies and wolves—still live here.

The *Flathead Comprehensive River Management Plan's* good proposals include human waste containment guidelines,



drone prohibition, fire pan/blanket requirement for campfires in/above highwater; and noise level and group size limits.

However, the Forest Service fails to acknowledge current recreation impacts or address the significant threats to Wilderness already occurring. Wilderness Watch is urging the agency to take immediate action to preserve the wild, including addressing wildlife displacement caused by recreation use; reducing impacts to the Middle Fork and Great Bear Wilderness from Schafer Meadows airstrip use; and reducing impacts along the South Fork to comply with the Wilderness Management Plan. The Forest Service also needs more data informing user capacity numbers; to allocate the vast majority of use on the wild rivers to the public, with commercial outfitting and guiding limited to what is “necessary and proper” as per the Wilderness Act; and to include the entirety of the Flathead River corridor, 1/4-mile to either side of the river, in data collection/analysis. 🐾

Welcome to the board, Michele and Larry!



Michele Dieterich is a retired art teacher and hiking guide. She has spent much of her life backpacking, skiing, and hiking in wild country and Wilderness. Michele began her advocacy work in Guatemala, preserving indigenous rights and culture with the women's group CONAVIGUA. She became involved in forest advocacy when the Bitterroot National Forest cut down an old-growth forest near her home and has been working ever since to protect wildlife habitat, old-growth, and the solace that Wilderness and intact forests provide. Michele was also a voice for grizzlies on the Montana Grizzly Bear Advisory Council in 2020. She lives with her husband in Montana.

Michele says she's honored to be a part of Wilderness Watch's vital work and join the dedicated group of people doing good things for Wilderness and wildlife.



Larry Campbell spent much of his childhood running wild while his dad mapped geology in remote areas in Montana, Idaho, and Washington. As part of his geology degree, Larry founded Princeton Ecology Action in 1969. After graduation, he mixed it up between guiding wilderness backpacking trips, seasonal geology work, and studying pre-industrial cultures abroad. Larry eventually settled in western Montana and built a tiny off-grid farm where he lives with his wife. In 1989, he co-founded Friends of the Bitterroot, and in retirement continues working to preserve the wild.

Larry sees wilderness as a stage for the miracle of Nature to play by its own rules, and believes as we witness the demise of Nature, protecting what wilderness remains becomes more essential for wildlife and for our human spirit. He says he looks forward to supporting the consequential role of Wilderness Watch in this great drama. 🐾

On the watch

Trump sets his sights on Alaska

On January 20, President Trump signed an Executive Order (EO) on Alaska, which threatens Wilderness and wildlife throughout the state. Included are:

- “Expedited development” of a road through the world-renowned Izembek Wilderness and National Wildlife Refuge;
- Reviving the Ambler Mining Road project, which threatens the Gates of the Arctic Wilderness; and
- Reversing Biden administration actions to halt oil and gas exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, one of the wildest ecosystems remaining on Earth.

Here's more specific information on these threats, which Wilderness Watch has long fought to stop.

Izembek Wilderness threatened—yet again

In November, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) proposed a land exchange to facilitate the construction of an 11-mile road through the Izembek Wilderness and National Wildlife Refuge. Izembek is a remote stretch of land on the Alaska Peninsula, where a quarter-million migratory birds congregate each fall and nearly 7,000 caribou migrate to overwinter. Sea otters swim in the Izembek Lagoon, along with migrating orcas, gray whales, minke whales, and Steller sea lions. Massive brown bears lumber through wilderness streams during peak summer salmon runs. The refuge is 95 percent Wilderness.

Because roads are not permitted in Wilderness, the agency proposes exchanging private lands for wilderness acreage. The road would be catastrophic for Izembek's wildlife and would cut the 307,982-acre Wilderness in two.

The road has been proposed for decades—originally for connecting a fish cannery in King Cove with Cold Bay's all-weather airport and more recently for medical evacuations. But the most recent rationale—claiming the road will benefit subsistence via easier access—could be used by any future Interior Secretary to build roads through any Wilderness, National Park, or National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. Every conservation unit in Alaska—more than 100 million acres—is now on the chopping block.

Right now, it's unclear how the Trump administration's USFWS will proceed, only that the threat of a road through Izembek is imminent. We'll take all necessary actions—including filing another lawsuit—to keep this road out of the Wilderness.

Ambler Mining Road to ruin

The sole purpose of the proposed Ambler Road is to facilitate huge mining operations that would benefit a private Canadian company at the expense of Wilderness and wildlife. If built, the Ambler Road would stretch west from the Dalton Highway, paralleling the Brooks Range for 211 miles to the mining claims. This “road to ruin” would cross Gates of the Arctic National Preserve and the Kobuk Wild and Scenic River, both ecologically significant public lands that make up part of the largest remaining roadless area in the country. The Ambler Road also would cross nearly 3,000 streams, 11 major rivers, major caribou migration routes, and would bisect a wide swath of the southern Brooks Range, home to numerous Athabaskan and Iñupiat villages, as well as grizzly bears, wolves, and Dall sheep.

In June 2024, the Biden administration finalized a decision to reject the Ambler Road proposal, and in the fall of 2024, Wilderness Watch, our supporters, and allies beat back an amendment attached to the National Defense Authorization Act that would have forced construction of the Ambler Road. The Trump administration's Alaska EO makes it clear that this battle to save Gates of the Arctic from the destructive Ambler Road is far from over.

Drilling threatens the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

In early January, the Biden administration concluded the second legally mandated oil and gas lease sale on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This lease sale—mandated by the 2017 Tax Act—was an even larger failure than the first, receiving no bids from the oil and gas industry.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge—America's largest wildlife refuge and one of the largest intact ecosystems in the world—is an almost mythical place, both beautiful and rugged with a unique combination of arctic, subarctic, and alpine habitats. The Arctic Refuge stretches approximately 200 miles by 200 miles, covering almost 20 million acres.

The Arctic Refuge provides critical habitat for polar bears, migrating caribou, muskoxen, wolves, Dall sheep, brown bears, arctic foxes, and more than 200 species of birds. Beluga and bowhead whales and ringed and bearded seals migrate along its coast.

While the Trump administration has yet again targeted the Arctic Refuge for drilling and associated development, Wilderness Watch believes that wilderness designation for the entire Arctic Refuge is sorely needed. 🐾



Porcupine caribou herd by Danielle Brigida



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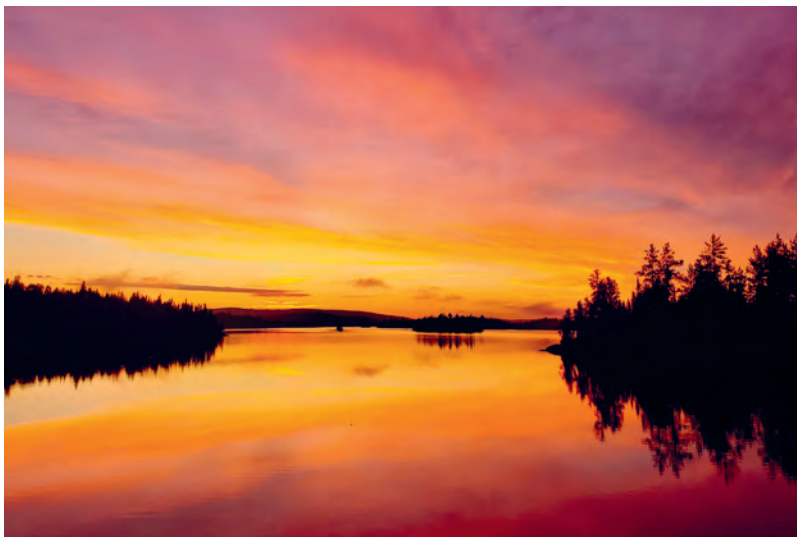
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118th Congress wrap up

January 3, 2025 concluded the 118th Congress. What Congress failed to do is a noteworthy silver lining because the bad wilderness bills of the 118th Congress that weren't enacted into law died. Dead bills must be reintroduced into the 119th Congress and start the legislative journey again. In the House, only two of about nine bills that were free of nonconforming special exceptions (i.e., "clean"), or contained measures that bolstered wilderness protection, cleared their



Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness by Heather Hansen/USFS

assigned committee. The House voted on none. Of approximately 19 House bills with wilderness-weakening provisions, five cleared their committee. The House passed two—mining in the watershed of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and drilling on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge—but the Senate never addressed them, so they also died.

In the Senate, there were about seven clean wilderness bills, and only one made it out of committee. Of approximately 15 Senate bills with wilderness-weakening provisions, 10 cleared their committee. The Senate passed two, but the House didn't address those bills, so those wilderness-weakening bills also died.

As the 118th Congress wrapped up, some lawmakers tried to negotiate for a public lands package with the committee-approved bills.

Given the bills that generally weakened Wilderness were Democrats' bills, and given the compromise to appease Republicans would have likely been adding provisions to majorly weaken other bedrock environmental laws, it is probably best for the National Wilderness Preservation System—and endangered species—that a public lands package never materialized.

We are starting to track bills in the 119th Congress, and will keep you updated! 🍷

You Sustain Our Work

Please consider making a special donation
to help us defend Wilderness and the Wilderness Act.

