

There has been real progress this year in wilderness preservation policy. The following special report highlights the significant developments and suggests actions for wilderness supporters.

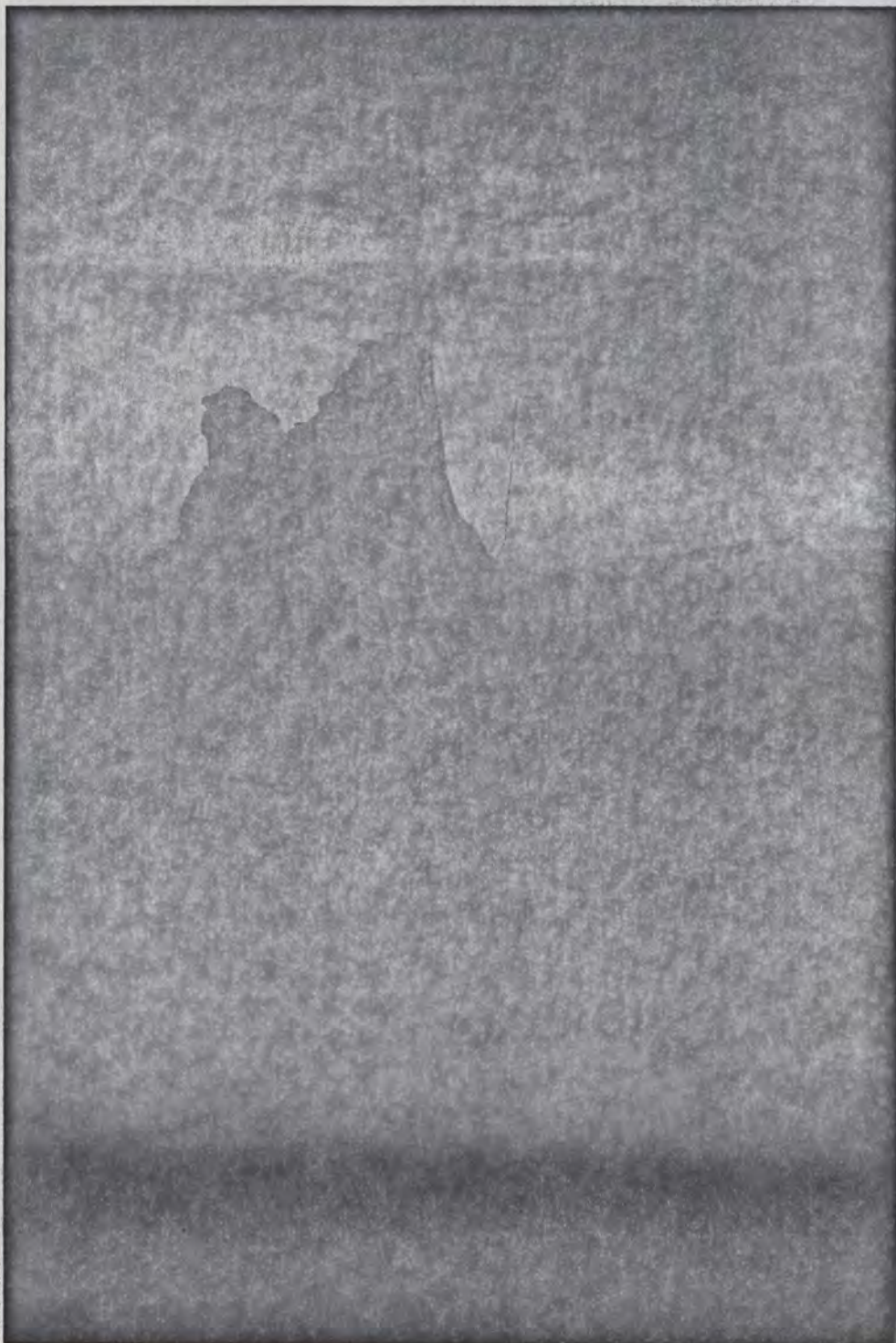
Introduction of the Endangered American Wilderness Act of 1977 in both houses of Congress marks the beginning of a major new initiative for the wilderness movement. The act would provide either "instant wilderness" or "wilderness study" designation for twenty-one National Forest roadless areas, totaling nearly two million acres. These areas are but a sample of the roughly 57 million acres of *de facto* wilderness in the National Forests. Senator Frank Church (D-Idaho), sponsor of the Senate version of the act (S. 1180) defines *de facto* wilderness as roadless, undeveloped land that "has no special protection . . . [but] is most in danger of losing its wilderness character before thorough review and considerations can be given." The list of areas differs slightly in the Senate and House bills, but in each case those chosen face imminent development of one sort or another. Representative Morris Udall (D-Arizona), sponsor of the House bill (H.R. 3454), believes the selected areas also "exemplify the kind of wild, nationally significant and popular roadless areas that are at stake . . . and illustrate the problems which threaten to destroy specific wilderness values."

Already, five days of hearings have been held on the House bill by the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Indian Affairs and Public Lands. For the first time in recent memory, a witness representing the Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service spoke in favor of wilderness designation and announced several major improvements in wilderness policy. The hearings also catalogued the many flaws in earlier efforts to consider the wilderness values of these lands. The Forest Service's Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE), conducted in 1972-73, overlooked many roadless areas and selected for further wilderness study only the most obvious candidates (often excluding the important timbered fringes of these areas). Using 5,000 acres as a mini-

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The Endangered American Wilderness Act

CHARLES CLUSEN and DOUGLAS SCOTT



"Question Mark Wall," the least of three summits of Lone Peak, Utah. 33,500 acres.

imum size, the agency identified over 1,400 areas totaling 56 million acres. The chief of the Forest Service then selected 274 of these areas for wilderness study, leaving 44 million acres in more than 1,100 areas open to development. Since 100 of the selected areas were already scheduled for wilderness study, RARE resulted in the addition of only 6.5 million acres to the list.

Concerned with the fate of these unselected areas, many of which were lands of highest priority for wilderness activists, the Sierra Club sued the Forest Service and thereby obtained from the agency a commitment to evaluate the wilderness potential of unselected areas as part of its normal land-use-planning process. Unfortunately, this promise produced little, for the agency's planning process has been seriously flawed insofar as wilderness consideration is concerned. No internal review has existed to ensure that "unit plans" meet minimum standards of thoroughness and objectivity. The promise of "further evaluation" for



Wheeler Geologic Area in the La Garita Additions, Colorado. 182,700 acres.

the unselected roadless areas has largely not been kept; their wilderness values have frequently been dismissed out of hand. Moreover, the Forest

Service continued to adhere too strictly to "pure" wilderness standards as a way of preventing many areas from receiving meaningful consideration.

Areas included in Endangered American Wilderness Act of 1977

State Area	National Forest	Acreage	"Instant" Wilderness Designation	Wilderness Study Designation	Local Representative
Alaska					
West Chichagof-Yakobi	Tongass	405,000	X (in House)	X (in Senate)	Young
Arizona					
Pusch Ridge*	Coronado	56,510	X		Udall
Galiuro Additions	Coronado	80,430		X	Udall
California					
Golden Trout	Inyo & Sequoia	240,000	X		Ketchum
Santa Lucia	Los Padres	21,250	X		Panetta
Ventana Additions	Los Padres	60,080	X		Panetta
Colorado					
Goose Creek Additions	Rio Grande	69,400	X		Evans
La Garita Additions	Rio Grande & Gunnison	182,700		X	Evans
Montana					
Mount Henry	Kootenai	22,000		X	Baucus
McGregor-Thompson	Lolo & Kootenai	89,000		X	Baucus
Welcome Creek	Lolo	28,900		X	Baucus
New Mexico					
Manzano Mountain	Cibola	37,000	X		Lujan
Sandia Mountain	Cibola	30,700	X		Lujan
Chama River Canyon	Sante Fe & Carson	50,900		X	Lujan
Oregon					
French Pete Creek	Willamette	42,000	X		Weaver
Kalmiopsis Additions	Siskiyou	270,000**	X	X	Weaver
Middle Santiam	Willamette	24,500	X		Weaver
Wild Rogue	Siskiyou	29,000	X		Weaver
Utah					
Lone Peak*	Wasatch & Uinta	33,500	X		McKay & Marriott
Washington (and Oregon)					
Wenaha-Tucannon	Umatilla	200,000***	X		Foley & Ullman
Wyoming					
Savage Run*	Medicine Bow	15,000		X	Roncalio

NOTES:

*Not in Senate bill **134,000 instant and 136,000 additional for study ***129,000 in Senate bill



Above: *Wenaha River Canyon in the Blue Mountains of Oregon. 200,000 acres.*
 Below: *Desert wash, Sandia Mountain, New Mexico. 30,700 acres.*



Thus, as 1977 began, each of the areas in the Udall-Church bill—and all roadless areas generally—were threatened: some by immediate timber sales, roads, and other developments; all by

the Forest Service's seriously inadequate decision-making process. But under the new Carter Administration, prospects for endangered roadless areas suddenly seem brighter.

On May 6, the new Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, M. Rupert Cutler, who supervises the Forest Service among other agencies, presented to the House subcommittee the Administration's views on the bill.

"The nation's wilderness," he said, "is indeed becoming a vanishing resource, and much of it is vulnerable to loss. The Carter Administration has committed itself to provide protection

for these lands within the Wilderness System. This department will pursue that goal with a new sense of urgency."

Cutler acknowledged the truth of criticisms that Forest Service wilderness review has been "too slow and too costly," pointing out that "the rising tide of public demand for more wilderness designations, without delay, continues to swell." He also announced his department's (and thus the Forest Service's) support for the Endangered American Wilderness Act, concluding that "although Forest Service land-management planning is still under way on most of" the areas, "and although tradeoff values and opportunity costs are not completely known, we agree that enough is known about these areas to enable us to recommend wilderness designation. For five of the areas, he recommended immediate designation (French Pete, Lone Peak, Middle Santiam, Mt. Henry and McGregor-Thompson). Additional areas may be proposed for "instant" wilderness when internal clearance is completed in late May. In any event, Cutler supported all of the areas in the bill for study designation at least.

In response to questions from Subcommittee Chairman Teno Roncalio and Representative Jim Weaver, Cutler laid to rest the "purity" arguments that the Forest Service had long used to oppose wilderness. He said he will "speed up our efforts to identify undeveloped areas that still can meet" wilderness criteria used in the past, but also stressed that "We also have an opportunity to include in the Wilderness System lands not entirely free of the 'marks of mankind,' but fully capable of providing, in the long-term, wilderness benefits to many people. In considering such lands for wilderness designation or study, we will look openly at the features or uses traditionally considered to be nonconforming. We will be more innovative in 'managing around' the objectionable features to minimize their impacts and ensure optimum wilderness quality."

The Administration's position was further elaborated by the President in his May 23 Environmental Message. Carter said that the National Wilderness Preservation System "must be expanded promptly, before the most deserving areas of federal lands are opened to other uses and lost to wilderness forever." He endorsed all the previous wilderness recommendations sent to Congress by earlier administra-

tions, but said he will propose to expand some of these, including the Idaho and Salmon River Breaks Primitive Areas in Idaho, the Guadalupe Escarpment Wilderness in New Mexico and Texas (combining wildlands in Carlsbad Caverns and Guadalupe Mountains National Parks with an expanse of national forest land lying in between), the Beartooth-Absaroka

Alaska." He directed that federal agencies expedite the preparation of wilderness proposals for eastern national forests, the national grasslands, and Alaskan national forests.

Anticipating the President's order for review of additional wilderness possibilities, Assistant Secretary Cutler had announced just such a program in his May 6 testimony:

With this announcement, one fully supported by President Carter, the Department of Agriculture has taken a major step toward assuming a role in wilderness preservation not seen from that quarter since the time of Aldo Leopold and Bob Marshall.

Despite Cutler's stress on a balanced forest policy, with "new initiatives to increase the productivity of nonwilderness forest lands, public and private," the reaction of the timber industry and trade groups has been hostile. The American Plywood Association (APA) said Cutler's support for the Endangered American Wilderness Act "appears to represent a major victory for those who are pushing aggressively, on many fronts, for expansion of the nation's wilderness at the expense of all other values."

The APA comment, in an alert to its member firms, was headlined: "Wilderness Issue Out of Control." It appealed for "unified opposition to this runaway wilderness threat by all in the wood industry and by every part of the distribution chain." The APA is calling for a letter-writing campaign to Congress, and especially to "Congressmen in the major metropolitan areas where the true meaning of wilderness is little understood."

The Carter Administration and Congress need to know that strong nationwide support exists for these important wilderness initiatives. With loggers' trucks rolling into the nation's capital, the industry is trying to create a stampede against wilderness. The President, Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland, and every congressman and senator need to know that grassroots support for wilderness is stronger than ever. Write letters to (1) President Carter (White House, Washington, D.C. 20500); (2) Hon. Bob Bergland (Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250); (3) Rep. Teno Roncalio who chairs the House Subcommittee on Indian Affairs and Public Lands (House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515); (4) Sen. James Abourezk (D-South Dakota), who chairs the Senate Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation, part of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee (Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510); and (5) your own representative and senators (who can be asked to cosponsor formally the Endangered American Wilderness Act). SCB



Philip Hyde

Chichagof, Alaska. 405,000 acres.

Wilderness in Montana and Wyoming, and the Grand Canyon Wilderness (including the Colorado River itself). The President pledged a "vigorous wilderness program for the Bureau of Land Management" and proposed the first BLM wilderness in Aravaipa Canyon, Arizona. Then, turning to national forest *de facto* wilderness, President Carter told Congress: "I support the objectives of the endangered-wilderness legislation now pending before Congress. Members of my Administration have recently testified in favor of immediate wilderness designation or protective study designation for all areas in this bill." Carter also directed the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to study additional areas for possible wilderness designation, emphasizing the "special need to preserve wilderness east of the Rockies and in

Mr. Chairman, we are going to take another complete look at the roadless and undeveloped lands in the entire National Forest System. We intend to categorize these undeveloped lands into three types, then ask the Congress to provide implementing legislation. One category will be areas which will become wilderness immediately. The second will be areas which need more study before the Congress can make its decision as to whether or not to designate as wilderness. The third category will be the remaining areas which require no further consideration as wilderness and thus would be devoted to other than wilderness uses. . . . The need to determine which of these lands will be wilderness and which will not be wilderness cannot wait for the years needed to complete the land-management planning process on all National Forests.