

Alaska Wilderness League Action – California League of Conservation Voters - Conservation Colorado - Defenders of Wildlife - Earthjustice - Earthworks – Endangered Species Coalition - Environment America - Environmental Protection Information Center – Friends of the Sonoran Desert - Grand Canyon Trust - Klamath Forest Alliance - League of Conservation Voters – Los Padres ForestWatch - Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness - National Parks Conservation Association - Natural Resources Defense Council - Sierra Club - Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance - Washington Environmental Council - Western Watershed Project - The Wilderness Society - The Rewilding Institute - Wilderness Workshop

February 22, 2021

Dear Representative,

We hope you and your staff are having a healthy and safe New Year. On behalf of our millions of members and supporters across the United States, we are writing to urge you to vote for Protecting America's Wilderness and Public Lands Act (PAW+), H.R. 803. This legislation consists of eight important public lands provisions and will be voted on the House floor on February 24, 2021. PAW+ will protect millions of acres in Colorado, Arizona, Washington, and California, and will help us reach the goal of protecting 30 percent of the U.S. by 2030.

Last Congress, the provisions included in PAW+ generated dynamic local and Tribal support and passed the House twice. In addition to supporting PAW+, we urge you to oppose any anti-environmental amendments that may be proposed during floor consideration.

These eight provisions will help underserved communities access parks and public lands, protect areas sacred to Indigenous peoples, ensure clean and safe drinking water, and promote the outdoor recreation economy. Furthermore, it will help mitigate the challenges posed by climate change to some of America's most special places and protect millions of acres of public lands.

PAW+ combines eight public lands bills and protects iconic and important public lands and waters in Colorado, Arizona, California, and Washington. All told, the bill protects almost 2.7 million acres including wilderness protections, designates more than 1,000 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers, and includes over 375,000 acres of other permanent protections. This important legislation includes:

Title I, H.R. 803, Colorado Wilderness Act: Designates more than 600,000 acres of wilderness in 32 distinct areas across the Centennial State. A large portion of the proposed areas would encompass mid-elevation ecosystems often underrepresented in Colorado's Wilderness lands and home to an astonishing variety of plant and wildlife

species. A product of over twenty years of compromise, the Colorado Wilderness Act began as the Citizen's Wilderness Plan, a vision for Colorado's public lands developed by a group of concerned citizens who inventoried lands and gathered input from stakeholders throughout the state to identify areas fitting for Wilderness designation.

Title II, H.R. 878, Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working

Forests Act: The forests of Northwest California contain some of the largest intact stands of old-growth oaks, conifers, and redwood forests in the state along with its only major undammed river, the Smith. A product of five years of stakeholder collaboration, the Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act would enhance and preserve the region's special public lands, expand economic and recreational opportunities throughout the region, and preserve more than 261,000 acres of Wilderness, 379 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers, and protect critical habitat designations for endangered salmon and steelhead.

Title III, H.R. 999, Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act:

Washington's Olympic National Forest is one of the most ecologically diverse and scenic forests in the country. This provision has been shaped through years of community input seeking to preserve its ancient old-growth forests, salmon-supporting streams, and outdoor recreation opportunities. The legislation would designate 126,000 acres of wilderness, the first new wilderness on the Olympic National Forest in nearly three decades, and add 464 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers, the first-ever protected on the Olympic Peninsula. The preservation of these lands and waters would not only ensure the ecological integrity of these beloved lands but also expand world-class outdoor recreation opportunities like hiking, camping, boating, hunting and fishing.

Title IV, H.R. 973, Central Coast Heritage Protection Act: California's central coast encompasses some of North America's most diverse landscapes and remains a key source for clean drinking water, wildlife habitat, and economic stimulus for nearby communities. The Central Coast Heritage Protection Act would secure lasting protections for two of its key landscapes, the Los Padres National Forest and Carrizo Plain National Monument.

Title V, H.R. 693, San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act: The San Gabriel Mountains are nothing short of a community and ecological gem. Located just an hour's drive outside of downtown Los Angeles, the area serves as a critical wildlife corridor for southern California and is home to iconic species such as the Nelson's bighorn sheep and the historic home of California condors, along with more than 300 native species that can be found nowhere else in the world. Additionally, its watershed provides a third of L.A.'s drinking water. This region is one of the most park-poor regions of the country, and the San Gabriel Mountains are one of the few places Angelenos can experience and enjoy the great outdoors.

Title VI, H.R. 1075, Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act: In an effort to both conserve critical wildlife habitat and bolster local access to the outdoors, the Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act would expand the boundary of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area by roughly 191,000 acres to include sites ranging from the Santa Clarita Valley to Griffith Park. This legislation is based on an extensive research and public engagement process conducted by the National Park Service as part of a 2010 special resource study of the “Rim of the Valley Corridor.” After six years and thousands of public comments, the Park Service recommended adding the corridor to the NRA due to the abundance of scenic landscapes, critical wildlife corridors, iconic waterways, and historic treasures in the region.

Title VII, H.R. 577, Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act: Safeguards some of the state’s most iconic, historic, and ecologically significant public lands while bolstering the region’s ample outdoor recreation opportunities, supporting local economies, and honoring our country’s veterans. A product of a decade of collaboration and compromise between businesses, recreationists, sportsmen, and conservation groups, the CORE Act would protect 400,000 acres of public lands including 73,000 acres of new wilderness and roughly 80,000 acres of recreation and conservation management areas, including the designation of the first-ever National Historic Landscape for Camp Hale to honor of the Army’s famed 10th Mountain Division.

Title VIII, H.R. 1052, The Grand Canyon Protection Act: Protects almost one million acres of federal lands, north, and south of the iconic Grand Canyon National Park, from new mining. Particularly concerning is uranium mining in the Grand Canyon region, which is a threat to the people, land, water, and wildlife that make the Grand Canyon so extraordinary. Mining has also harmed the health and welfare of Tribal communities. Specifically, the Grand Canyon Protection Act would make the 2012 temporary mining ban permanent, thereby protecting the watershed and local communities from new uranium mining for generations to come.

Our organizations strongly urge you to vote for the PAW+ Act. Doing so will protect key public lands, help address the climate crisis, connect underserved communities with our public lands, protect areas sacred to Indigenous communities, and promote the outdoor economy. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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