

PROTECTING ADDITIONAL WILDLANDS

Passed: 231-183

SUMMARY:

The House passed a bill that would protect millions of acres of public lands as Wilderness, Wild & Scenic Rivers, and other areas of conservation importance. (*February 12, 2020, Roll Call No. 69*)

BACKGROUND:

Since the enactment of the Wilderness Act in 1964, more than 111 million acres of public lands have been protected as wilderness across the United States. Wilderness areas, along with the rest of the nation's 640 million public lands, provide countless opportunities for hiking, observing wildlife, hunting and fishing, and participating in other recreation and cultural activities. In total, activities like these support an \$887 billion outdoor recreation economy that supports 7.6 million jobs. From protecting biodiversity to improving the economy, public lands provide innumerable benefits to the people of the United States.

Rep. Diana DeGette (D-Colo.) introduced H.R. 2546, the Colorado Wilderness Act, on May 7, 2020, to designate 600,000 acres of new, expanded, or potential Wilderness in the state of Colorado. The bill was later combined with five other public lands bills pending before the House and became known as the Protecting America's Wilderness Act. In total, the package would protect 1.3 million acres of wilderness, 1,000 miles of wild and scenic rivers, and 1 million acres of scenic, restoration, or recreation areas across Colorado, California, and Washington. This legislation would conserve and restore critical ecosystems, improve access to public lands, and secure dearly needed ecosystem services.

OUTCOME:

On February 12, 2020, the House passed H.R. 2546, 231-183. "Yea" was the pro-conservation vote.