

PROTECTING ADDITIONAL WILDLANDS

Passed: 227-200

SUMMARY:

The House passed a bill that would designate millions of acres as wilderness areas or other protected public lands. (*February 26, 2021, Roll Call No. 45*)

BACKGROUND:

Public lands conserve some of the largest, most intact landscapes in North America. Wilderness areas are a special type of public land unit designated to preserve the natural qualities of areas with little to no human activity. Covering more than 111 million acres, Wilderness areas are home to countless threatened and endangered species and are key to staving off the biodiversity crisis. Other public lands designations, such as national monuments and wild and scenic rivers, also protect important wildlife habitat, provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and preserve sacred sites and other culturally significant areas.

Rep. Diana DeGette (D-Colo.) introduced H.R. 803, the Colorado Wilderness Act of 2021, on February 4, 2021, to designate approximately 660,000 acres of new, expanded or potential wilderness in the state of Colorado. The bill was later combined with several other bills that would protect additional public lands and repackaged as the Protecting America's Wilderness and Public Lands Act. In total, the package would protect more than 1.4 million acres of wilderness, 1,200 miles of wild and scenic rivers and hundreds of thousands of other public lands across several states and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The bill would also codify the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program, a critical grant program administered by the Department of the Interior to increase access to nature in park-poor communities. This legislation would conserve vital habitat for countless species and increase access to the outdoors for all.

OUTCOME:

On February 26, 2021, the House passed H.R. 803, 227-200. "Yea" was the pro-conservation vote.