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## Subcommittee Reviews Slate of Wilderness and Public Land Bills

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Today, the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands held a [legislative hearing](#) on eight bills related to Wilderness and public lands. The bills included measures to modify the boundaries of current federal land holdings, establish new Wilderness areas, and allow for the disposal of surplus federal lands.

*“Monuments, Wilderness and other land-use designations have been a topic of much debate in this subcommittee. While there are certain areas of special significance that should be managed as wilderness or otherwise preserved for future generations, we need to ensure that those designations are fully vetted and protect the interests and livelihoods of the communities and stakeholders that could be impacted. ... It is important to return to a practice of looking at wilderness proposals thoroughly and individually as opposed to comprehensive omnibus bills and Administrative actions that seek to designate millions of acres in one fell swoop with little, if any, consideration of the consequences,”* **said Subcommittee Chairman Rob Bishop (UT-01).** *“Secondly, I also look forward to exploring options to reduce the federal estate, particularly in those cases in which the government has identified excess or surplus lands. The federal government currently has a multi-billion dollar maintenance backlog for the lands it holds. Especially given our current budget climate, it makes perfect sense to free the federal government from land it doesn’t need and allow agencies to focus on our most prized national parks, forests and other lands.”*

*“Let me be clear, there are lands that should be managed as Wilderness, and, in my view, most of those lands have already been designated. However, this hearing today demonstrates that Chairman Bishop and I are open to the possibility of appropriately designating new Wilderness areas,”* **said Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04).** *“Decisions on Wilderness designations should be made on a case-by-case basis, be done in accordance with the Wilderness Act, be informed by broad local input so as to enjoy wide local support, and include a review of the potential designation’s impact on the public’s access, limitations on recreation, and effect on local economies and job creation activities.”*

Wilderness is the most restrictive designation for federal public lands and can only be designated by Congress under the Wilderness Act of 1964. Roads and permanent structures are not allowed in Wilderness areas, and activities like logging, mining, bike riding and most vehicular traffic are strictly prohibited. These restrictions inhibit job creation and can significantly impact the economies of rural communities.

The hearing was held in advance of the Interior Department’s announcement of a list of

“crown jewel” areas of federal land that the Obama Administration believes is ready for immediate Wilderness designation, originally scheduled to be released by October 15, 2011.

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