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[H.R. 1138, Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Jerry Peak Wilderness Additions Act](#)

FLOOR SITUATION

On Monday, July 27, 2015, the House will consider [H.R. 1138](#), *the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Jerry Peak Wilderness Act*, under suspension of the rules. The bill was introduced on February 26, 2015, by Rep. Michael Simpson (R-ID) and was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, which ordered the bill reported by unanimous consent on July 9, 2015.

SUMMARY

H.R. 1138 designates certain land in central Idaho as wilderness areas and authorizes specified federal land to be conveyed to cities and counties in that state. These lands are under the jurisdiction of the National Forest System and the Bureau of Land Management.

Key provisions of the bill include:

Wilderness Designations—The bill designates specified federal lands in central Idaho as the “Hemingway-Boulders Wilderness” (67,998 acres), the “White Clouds Wilderness” (90,769 acres), and the “Jim McClure-Jerry Peak Wilderness” (116,898 acres), with all three becoming a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System. The bill directs the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to provide a map and legal description of each relevant area in their respective Department’s jurisdiction to the Committee on Natural Resources. The bill authorizes the Secretaries to acquire any land within the boundaries of the wilderness areas by “donation, exchange, or purchase from a willing seller,” and incorporates any acquired lands into the wilderness area.

Management of Newly Created Wilderness Lands—The bill directs the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to administer the specified wilderness lands under their respective jurisdictions, and to collaboratively develop wilderness management plans for these lands within three years of enactment. The bill stipulates that it will not impact water rights held by the U.S. or the State of Idaho and prohibits the federal government from funding, developing, or authorizing any new water diversion, storage, or carriage structures in the new wilderness areas.

Land Conveyances for Public Purposes—The bill directs the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to convey specified portions of land to certain Idaho counties and cities; the bill stipulates that if the conveyed lands cease to be used for the public purpose for which the parcel was conveyed, the Secretary may revert the land to federal ownership. The conveyed lands are as follows:

- Blaine County, Idaho, one acre or less for a school bus turnaround.
- Custer County, Idaho, approximately 114 acres of land for a public park and campground, 10 acres for a fire hall, 80 acres for a waste transfer site, and a specified Forest Service road.
- The City of Challis, Idaho, approximately 460 acres of land for various public purposes.
- The City of Clayton, Idaho, 23 acres for a public cemetery, two acres for a public park, two acres for a water tower, six acres for a wastewater treatment plant, and two acres for a fire hall.
- The City of Stanley, Idaho, four acres for a specified city workforce housing project.

BACKGROUND

The National Wilderness Preservations System, established in 1964 by the Wilderness Act, includes over 700 wilderness areas in 44 states totaling more than 107 million acres. According to the U.S. Forest Service, wilderness areas contribute “significantly to our nation’s health and well-being” and provide “public benefits . . . as diverse as the areas themselves and [that] far exceed the mere acreage provided.”¹

Land designated as a wilderness area has the “highest level of conservation protection for federal lands,” including the prohibition of the use of motorized devices and bicycles. Four federal land management agencies—U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service—are authorized to manage specified wilderness areas “so as to preserve and, where possible, to restore their wilderness character.” Only Congress may designate or change the status of wilderness areas.²

H.R. 1138 designates approximately 275,665 acres in the Boulder and White Cloud (BWC) Mountains and the Jerry Peak of central Idaho as wilderness areas.³

COST

A Congressional Budget Office (CBO) cost estimate is currently unavailable.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information please contact [John Huston](#) with the House Republican Policy Committee by email or at 6-5539.

¹ See U.S. Forest Service, [“Wilderness”](#).

² See National Park Service, [“Wilderness: Frequently Asked Questions”](#).

³ See *Idaho Statesman* article, [“Simpson’s Boulder-White Clouds bill passes important hurdle in the House.”](#) July 10, 2015.