

The time for Scotchman Peaks is now

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Scotchman Peak has stood guard over the region since the earliest days of time. It's only right that we return the favor and stand up for such a unique treasure by calling on Idaho's congressional delegation to designate the area as wilderness.

The time for Scotchman Peaks Wilderness is now.

The proposed wilderness area is unique in its terrain and its beauty. Towering high in the Cabinet Mountains, Scotchman Peak looks out over Lake Pend Oreille and the Pend Oreille River. At 7,009 feet, it is the highest point in the county and offers stunning views of the region. The 88,000-acre roadless area has changed little over the centuries — keeping man's influence to a few footprints scattered here and there on its craggy slopes.

The reasons for protecting the area makes sense on any number of levels, from a feeding-the-soul level of its peace and beauty to creation of trails to hike and explore the region to the more practical ones of economy. Studies have shown the creation of new wilderness areas boosts property values, stimulates economic growth and, because the area's natural beauty is preserved, it draws people, jobs and resources to the region.

The proposed Scotchman Peaks Wilderness has drawn a diversity and depth of support that is rare in today's world. The plan has garnered backing from everyone from local chambers of commerce to political leaders to trails groups.

As noted by others, the Scotman Peaks contributes to the local economy and quality of life through recreation and tourism. It provides habitat for a diversity of fish, wildlife and plants — as well as a thriving mountain goat population.

As we did nine years ago, the Daily Bee joins its voice to those calling on the federal government to protect the Scotchman Peaks region and designate it as wilderness. We also call on our congressional delegation to lead the charge.

There is no other answer, no other solution, that makes sense.

Caroline Lobsinger is the managing editor of the Bonner County Daily Bee.