

Proposed Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Act 2016 (S.3531)

Frequently Asked Questions

PLACE

Where is the area that would be designated as Wilderness? The lands outlined in S.3531 lie within Idaho along its border with Montana; north of the Clark Fork River and east of Lightning Creek in the Idaho Panhandle National Forests.

How much land will be designated?

The Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Act of 2016 would designate 13,900 acres of national forest land in Bonner County as Wilderness. This is one half of one percent of the total acres of federal land within the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. The majority of the Scotchman Peaks area has been managed as recommended Wilderness since the Roadless Area and Review (RARE) I and II processes in the 1970s.

Who owns these lands?

The Scotchman Peaks are owned by the American people and managed by the U.S. Forest Service. This is not a transfer of lands from one entity to another.

PROCESS

How is Wilderness designated?

The Forest Service can identify places deserving Wilderness protection, but only Congress can make it permanent by passing legislation that then must be signed into law by the President. Since any future changes would require congressional approval, this process assures an intent for permanent preservation.

How were the boundaries chosen for recommended Wilderness?

The recommended wilderness boundaries are a result of several extensive public processes, dating back to the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE) of the 1970s. Through RARE I and RARE II in the 1970s, the 1987 Forest Plan, 2009 Idaho Roadless Rule, and the 2015 Forest Plan, the boundaries were gradually shaped and refined by public input.

How has the public been involved in this wilderness proposal?

The public review processes from RARE I and II, the 1987 forest plan, Idaho Roadless rule and 2002-2015 revised forest plan period included hundreds of meetings and field trips in locations accessible to all interested parties. Written comments were submitted by thousands of local residents.

When will Congress act on the bill?

The Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Act was introduced late in the 114th Congress. Senator Risch introduced the bill in order to give North Idahoans an opportunity to review the legislation, review the boundaries and provide input. The bill must be re-introduced before it can be enacted by congress.

Isn't there enough designated Wilderness in Idaho already?

There are no designated wilderness areas in Idaho's nine northern counties. If enacted, the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness act would designate 13,900 acres of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests as wilderness, only one half of one percent of the forest as a whole (2.3 million acres) .

Why wasn't Montana included in the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Act?

When it comes to wilderness, members of Congress prefer to work within their own state lines. It is up to the two senators and lone representative from Montana to decide if and when to introduce legislation to designate the Montana portion of the Scotchman Peaks as Wilderness.

Can formerly logged areas be designated as Wilderness?

Yes. Lands that have been logged are eligible for Wilderness designation if the affected areas are naturally reverting.

Are there roads in the Scotchmans that Wilderness designation would close?

No. There are no roads in the Forest Service inventory of open or closed roads, motorized trails, or snowmobiling areas within the area proposed for wilderness.

THREATS AND BENEFITS**What is Wilderness?**

Wilderness is the highest level of protection for our public lands. It is designed to preserve lands and wildlife in their natural state. Wilderness designation would protect and preserve the natural condition of the Scotchmans' steep and deep valleys, which hold diverse communities of plants and animals, clear flowing streams and precious solitude. A wide range of recreational activities can be enjoyed in Wilderness, including: hiking, backpacking, climbing, berry-picking, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, skiing, mountaineering, photography, wildlife viewing and bird watching (Wilderness Act, Section 4(a)) Mining, logging, off-road vehicle use, and oil and gas drilling are not permitted. Use of motorized equipment and mechanical transport, including mountain bikes, are also not permitted.

Why Wilderness?

Current growth trends and future technological development could pose many threats that are hard to predict today. Areas recommended for wilderness designation by forest plans are

administrative decisions, subject to shifting boundaries and reclassification as forest plans change. Wilderness designation will preserve the pristine character of this area in its natural state for our future and our children's future.

What benefits would Wilderness designation bring?

Wilderness brings the highest level of protection available for public lands and their natural landscape. These are places where nature operates on its own with almost zero disturbance. There are no roads, no motors or mechanical devices, or development of any kind. The core idea behind Wilderness is placing value on our country's wildest places precisely because they're wild. Sportsmen will tell you that wilderness areas are often the very best places to hunt and fish — because elk, deer, and fish don't like to be disturbed either. You can camp, climb, hike, and paddle in wilderness. There is a spiritual concept as well — preserving places where people can go to find solitude and escape the noise of civilization.

What are the threats if the area is not designated as Wilderness?

The Scotchman Peaks enjoy broad support for Wilderness designation partly because there are no logging or mining activities or proposals for such and not much opportunity within the area. That may be the case today, but threats to the area could emerge in five, ten, 20 or more years. Protecting the area as Wilderness will ensure that future generations will enjoy the area the way that we do today.

What is the economic impact of Wilderness designation?

Multiple studies by Headwaters Economics and others have concluded that protected federal public lands like Wilderness areas can be an important economic asset. Wilderness preserves the “quality of life” upon which most economic growth in Western counties is currently based.

People want to live close to protected lands because they want to be able to enjoy all these lands have to offer, and they know that these lands will be around for their future enjoyment because they are protected. Western counties with protected public land support above average rates of job growth, exceeding that of counties with no protected lands. Headwaters Economics has also found that there are higher levels of per capita income in places where there is more protected public land. (*Protected Lands and Economics*, 2016).

MANAGEMENT

What would change from proposed wilderness to designated Wilderness ?

The Forest Service has managed the Scotchmans area as ‘recommended wilderness’ since 1987. There would be little change in on-the-ground management between the current recommended wilderness and designated Wilderness. The main difference is that with designated Wilderness, management will be more durable over time and better assure preservation of the area's wilderness character. All traditional uses of this area — hiking, hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, photography and berry picking — will be preserved by Wilderness designation.

Will I be able to hunt and fish in the Scotchman Peaks after designation?

Yes. Nothing in the Wilderness Act or Senator Risch's bill prohibit prohibits hunting or fishing.

Will Idaho Department of Fish and Game continue to manage fish and wildlife in the Scotchman Peaks after designation?

Yes. Section 4(c) of the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Act of 2016 states: "Nothing in this Act affects the jurisdiction of the State of Idaho with respect to fish and wildlife on public land in the State."

Will the Forest Service be able to control fire, insects, and disease?

Yes. Section 5 of the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Act allows the Forest Service to "take such measures within the Wilderness area as determined to be necessary for the control of fire, insects, and disease."

Will the area be closed to off-road vehicles, snowmobiles and mountain bikes?

Yes, although access to the proposed wilderness will not change. The Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF) already prohibits the use of motorized and mechanized vehicles within the area proposed for wilderness.

Does the proposal affect search and rescue operations?

No. Helicopters have landed in the Scotchman Peaks several times in recent years for health and safety purposes. Wilderness designation would not stop the use of mechanical means for rescue. Section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 allows search and rescue officials to use motorized vehicles and aircraft in "emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area."

Are wheel chairs allowed in wilderness?

Yes. Section 508(c) of the Americans with Disabilities Act "reaffirms that nothing in the Wilderness Act prohibits wheelchair use in a wilderness area by an individual whose disability requires its use."

How will the Act impact management of adjacent areas?

The Scotchman Peaks Wilderness Act will not affect management of other adjacent lands and will not create any "buffer zones". Section 6, states: "*Nothing in this Act creates a protective perimeter or buffer zone around the wilderness area.*"

Is Grazing allowed in Wilderness?

Yes. Section 4(d)(4) of the Wilderness Act allows existing grazing operations to continue when a wilderness area is established. However, there are currently no grazing operations in the Scotchman Peaks.

How will trails be maintained?

Long-term trail maintenance and other stewardship activities will be conducted in large part as they are today, by volunteers. The Friend of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness are committed to

training a dedicated group of volunteers about the use of traditional tools and methods such as crosscut saws, pulaskis and hand-work for trail maintenance.

How diverse is the support for the Scotchman Peaks proposal?

The proposal has been endorsed by Ponderay Pedalers, the local mountain biking club, Idaho Forest Group, hunting and fishing clubs, chambers of commerce, many civic organizations, several local newspapers and over 7,000 "Friends" from all walks of life and political persuasions.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WILDERNESS?

There is much information about the Scotchman Peaks proposal to be found at www.scotchmanpeaks.org. For specific questions, write to info@scotchmanpeaks.org

For specific information on the Wilderness Act and wilderness management, visit <http://www.Wilderness.net>

Wilderness.net is a public wilderness information website formed in 1996 through a collaborative partnership between the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center and the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute--the federal government's wilderness training and research arms, respectively--and the College of Forestry and Conservation's Wilderness Institute at the University of Montana.