

**Dave Freeland
District Ranger, Retired
USDA Forest Service**

**Testimony in Support of HR 1581 – Wilderness and Roadless Area
Release Act of 2011
Before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands**

My name is Dave Freeland and I support HR 1581 – The "*Wilderness and Roadless Area Release Act of 2011.*"

I retired from the USDA Forest Service in 2006, after successfully completing 34 years of public service. During my time with the U.S. Forest Service, I served on three national forests and seven ranger districts within California, in a variety of professional and administrative positions, including District Ranger and Acting Deputy Forest Supervisor. I'm a professional Forester and have been a member of the Society of American Foresters for approximately 35 years.

Additionally, I participated on the command staff of several National Interagency Incident Management Teams. These teams respond to significant natural and human-caused disasters, including catastrophic wildfires.

I currently work as a part-time private consultant for the County of Kern assisting the County with complex and sometimes controversial land management issues.

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During my career, I have witnessed substantial acreage of National Forest system lands reallocated from a multiple-use category into more restrictive designations termed "*Specially Designated Areas*."

Since the time of the Wilderness Act of 1964, the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, the Forest Service Roadless Area Conservation Final Rule of 2001, and the State Petitions for Inventoried Roadless Area Management Final Rule of 2005, approximately 166 million acres or 86% of the 192 million acre National Forest and Grassland system is in wilderness, wild & scenic rivers and inventoried roadless areas. On the Sequoia National Forest where I retired, only 22% of this 1.1 million acre forest currently remains in multiple-use.

As a former federal land manager, this conspicuous imbalance concerns me for the following reasons.

- 1) Most recreation visitor use occurs on multiple-use designated lands. With an ever increasing population of visitors being confined to a shrinking multiple-use land base, adverse consequences occur such as unintended resource damage, increased conflicts between visitors and additional law enforcement problems.

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- 2) Specially designated areas can significantly diminish the enjoyment of public lands by limiting and/or prohibiting the responsible use of motorized and mechanized equipment such as off-highway vehicles, mountain bikes and mechanized deer carriers.

- 3) Individuals with physical disabilities and older Americans have difficulty or are completely denied access to a large portion of their public lands due to the lack of roaded access. This adverse situation will only intensify as millions of “Baby Boomers” will be retiring over the next couple of decades.

- 4) Specially designated areas can limit federal land management agencies from adequately treating vast acreages of land that are over stocked with trees and other vegetation which contribute to the risk of catastrophic attack by insects, disease and wildfire. Americans lose the benefit of by-products produced from these silviculture treatments in the form of thinned trees that contribute to our nation’s need for wood fiber such as dimensional lumber, wood chips and other wood products. Wood fiber is of critical importance to our nation’s economy and livelihood.

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In summary, Congress and the U.S. Forest Service made a commitment to the American people that when the roadless area review was accomplished; those lands not suitable for additional congressionally designated wilderness would revert back to multiple-use. Congress and the U.S. Forest Service need to meet their commitments.

The U.S. Forest Service is equipped to manage and conserve multiple-use lands in perpetuity, as guided by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and by each Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan and accompanying Environmental Impact Statement, as required by the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended.

HR 1581 is a well thought out piece of legislation because it supports moving those areas into the nation's wilderness preservation system that truly have special characteristics while releasing back into multiple-use those lands that have no special attributes deserving of wilderness classification.

Multiple-use lands provide more Americans with the widest variety of resource and social benefits. Multiple-use lands best exemplify the Forest Service's time tested principal of *"The greatest good, for the greatest number of people, in the long-run."*