

Subcommittee on Federal Lands  
Tom McClintock, Chairman  
Hearing Memorandum

May 9, 2016

**To:** All Subcommittee on Federal Lands Members

**From:** Majority Committee Staff – Spencer Kimball  
Subcommittee on Federal Lands, x 6-7736

**Hearing:** Legislative hearing on H.R. 5132 (Rep. Greg Walden), To adjust the eastern boundary of the Whychus-Deschutes Wilderness Study Area in the State of Oregon to facilitate fire prevention and response activities to protect adjacent private property, and for other purposes.  
**May 12, 2016 at 10:00 AM; 1324 Longworth HOB.**

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**H.R. 5132 (Rep. Greg Walden), “*Crooked River Ranch Fire Protection Act*”**

**Bill Summary**

H.R. 5132, introduced by Congressman Greg Walden (R-OR-02), adjusts the eastern boundary of the Whychus-Deschutes Wilderness Study Area (WSA) in the State of Oregon to facilitate fire prevention and response activities to protect adjacent private property, and for other purposes.

**Invited Witnesses**

**Panel I**

*The Honorable Greg Walden (R-OR-02)*

**Panel II**

*Ms. Abbie Jossie*

Acting Assistant Director, National Landscape Conservation System & Community Partnerships  
Bureau of Land Management  
Washington, D.C.

*Mr. Richard Hoffmann*

Fire Chief, Crooked River Ranch  
Terrebonne, Oregon

## **Background**

Crooked River Ranch is an unincorporated community in central Oregon with a population of about 5,500 residents. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers land west of the community and directly adjacent to hundreds of homes as the Whychus-Deschutes Wilderness Study Area (WSA). This WSA is one of 517 managed by BLM, which collectively cover approximately 12.6 million acres across the nation.<sup>1</sup>

Jefferson County, Oregon and Crooked River Ranch determined that the WSA lands are in the highest risk category for exposure to devastating wildfire due to overstocked juniper stands under the Jefferson County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. To make matters worse, the community is located on a peninsula at the convergence of the Crooked and Deschutes river canyons and has only one entrance and exit, drastically increasing the risk to public safety from fire.

Despite the high fire risk, BLM is not performing mechanical fire prevention activities within the overstocked juniper stands in the WSA. In addition, firefighting tactics are greatly hampered on the WSA, leaving local firefighters with no maneuvering room to protect life and property in the event of catastrophic wildfire. H.R. 5132 excludes roughly 830 acres of the WSA and adjusts its boundary back to the canyon rim, providing a buffer between the WSA and the community. While the land will remain federally owned, reducing the size of the WSA allows the local community to work with BLM to implement practical management to prevent fires and ensures local firefighters can protect the community in the event of fire.

## **Administration Position**

The administration position is unknown at this time.

## **Cost**

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate has not yet been completed for this bill.

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<sup>1</sup> [Wilderness Study Area Information Page](#). Bureau of Land Management.

