

# Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Tom McClintock, Chairman  
Hearing Memo

June 11, 2015

**To:** Federal Lands Subcommittee Members

**From:** Spencer Kimball, Subcommittee Staff, x 6-7736

**Subject:** Legislative hearing on H.R. 1138, "*Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Jerry Peak Wilderness Additions Act*" on **June 16, 2015 at 10:00 AM; 1324 Longworth.**

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## *H.R. 1138 - "Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Jerry Peak Wilderness Additions Act"*

### **Bill Summary**

H.R. 1138, introduced by Congressman Mike Simpson, (R-ID), would establish certain Wilderness areas, release certain Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) back into multiple-use, and authorize various land conveyances involving U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land in central Idaho. Specifically, the bill would create three new Wilderness areas totaling 275,655 acres on USFS and BLM lands, would release four WSAs totaling 153,883 acres on BLM and USFS lands back to multiple-use, and transfer 12 parcels of BLM and USFS land totaling 913 acres to local counties and cities.

### **Invited Witnesses**

*Department of Interior - TBD*

*The Honorable Mike Simpson (R-ID)*  
Member of Congress

*Ms. Leslie Weldon*, Deputy Chief, National Forest System  
U.S. Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Washington, D.C.

### **Background**

The areas subject to this bill, which include BLM and USFS lands, are located in central Idaho and attract a number of outdoor recreationists, including snowmobilers, hunters, backpackers, hikers, mountain bikers, outfitters, campers and others. There is strong opposition to these or other areas in Idaho being designated as a national monument by the President under the Antiquities Act of 1906. In response, Rep. Simpson has developed and introduced bills over the last decade that would designate new Wilderness Areas but also release WSAs back into multiple-use and transfer federal lands to local cities and counties.

Rep. Simpson first introduced the Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act (CIEDRA) in 2004. That bill would have designated 332,000 acres as new Wilderness and released 131,000 acres from existing WSAs. The bill was passed by the House in 2006 during the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, but was not taken up in

the Senate. Rep. Simpson introduced the bill in subsequent Congressional sessions, but revamped the proposal in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress and introduced the newly-titled *Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Jerry Peak Wilderness Additions Act* in February 2015. The revamped bill increases the amount of acreage released from WSAs and decreases the amount of acreage designated as Wilderness so that no motorized roads or trails will be closed and snowmobile areas will be left open.

Specifically, the bill would designate three new Wilderness areas, encompassing 275,655 acres, including the Hemingway-Boulders Wilderness, White Clouds Wilderness, and the Jim McClure – Jerry Peak Wilderness. Four WSAs, encompassing 153,883 acres would be released back to multiple-use activities: Jerry Peak WSA, Jerry Peak West WSA, Corral-Horse Basin WSA, and Boulder Creek WSA.

The bill also transfers 12 parcels of BLM and USFS land totaling 913 acres to Blaine and Custer Counties and several smaller cities in central Idaho. This land will be used for a variety of purposes, including housing for seasonal workers, fire protection, waste transfer, cemeteries, and other local needs.

Grazing permittees with allotments within the boundaries of the “Boulder White Clouds Grazing Area Map” would be allowed to voluntarily retire their grazing permits and be eligible for compensation from a third party conservation group at \$300/aum. Any retired grazing permits would be closed to future grazing.

No roads that are currently open to vehicles or trails that are currently open to two wheeled motorized-use would be closed. The legislation does not restrict or preclude low-level overflights of military aircraft, flight testing, or the designation of new special-use airspace over Wilderness areas. The bill does not include any protective perimeter or buffer zone around the Wilderness areas and does not restrict activities or use of lands outside the Wilderness areas that can be seen or heard within the area.

The bill is currently supported by Larry Schoen, Blaine County Commissioner; Wayne Butts, Custer County Commissioner; the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation; Your Boulder-White Clouds; and the Sawtooth Society.

### **Administration Position**

During a hearing on the identical Senate version of this bill (S. 583, sponsored by Sen. Jim Risch (R-ID)) on May 21, 2015, BLM and USFS stated their general support of the bill but expressed minor concerns about some of the transfers of federal lands to cities and counties.

### **Cost**

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