

Committee on Natural Resources

Rob Bishop, Chairman
Markup Memorandum

July 24, 2017

To: All Natural Resources Committee Members

From: Majority Staff – Brandon Miller
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x6-7736)

Mark-up: **H.R. 2075 (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.
July 25-26, 2017; 1324 Longworth HOB

H.R. 2075 (Rep. Greg Walden), “Crooked River Ranch Fire Protection Act”

Summary of the Bill

H.R. 2075, introduced on April 6, 2017, 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.

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.¹

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. 2075 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

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

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.

Major Provisions

- Requires the Department of the Interior to adjust the eastern boundary of Deschutes Canyon-Steelhead Falls Wilderness Study Area in Oregon to exclude approximately 832 acres, in order to facilitate fire prevention and response activities on the excluded public lands and adjacent private property.
- The public lands to be excluded will no longer be subject to Sec. 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

Anticipated Amendments

None

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.

Effect on Current Law

None.

