



December 15, 2017

Congressman Scott Tipton  
218 Cannon HOB  
Washington DC 20515

Senator Corey Gardner  
354 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Re: HR 1349 – Wilderness Act Amendments

Dear Congressman Tipton and Senator Gardner:

**The above Organizations are contacting your Offices' to provide more detailed information and follow up to our discussions earlier this week regarding our opposition to HR 1349, which would make significant revisions to the Wilderness Act.** Our Organizations must oppose the legislation, as we are concerned HR 1349 would: 1. Create significant user conflict; 2. Be of limited benefit on the ground as significant site specific effort would have to follow HR 1349 passage to open any routes; 3. Implementations of any changes would be exceptionally costly; and 4. Expansion of nonconforming uses into Wilderness areas would degrade Wilderness quality and in the long term result in extensive new discussions regarding expansion of Wilderness into areas already found unsuitable for designation.

While our Organizations have been staunch supporters of expanding access to public lands, **we must oppose HR 1349** as we are aware of a huge number of interests and concerns, such as the motorized community, ranching, timber, recreation, mineral extractions, and water that have significant concerns regarding the Wilderness Act and related management standards, such as Wilderness Study areas and recommended Wilderness. **The Organizations would absolutely welcome a collaborative discussion regarding the release of WSAs and providing clarity on**

**other Wilderness type management issues, but that discussion would not result from HR 1349.**

The Organizations believe this type of discussion would be of more value to addressing recreational needs of all users and all other interests as there are fewer management restrictions in WSA or RWA areas and expanding opportunities can happen in a far more cost-effective manner. Addressing the concerns of one user group around these issues will simply result in further conflict between users and interests and that type of legislatively created conflict must be avoided.

**While HR 1349 might appear to provide access for these uses in Wilderness areas, the Organizations note that its passage would not open routes any on the ground.** Rather its passage would be the first step in a very long and contentious process as the overwhelming portion of the land management offices in Colorado have moved mechanized travel to designated routes on public lands. Since these planning efforts have been completed, there are no legal trails in Wilderness Areas for mechanized travel. Each planning unit would have to undertake extensive revisions of current plans in order to legally allow mechanized usage in these newly opened areas. Any discussions on this issue would be contentious at best. Given the current budget challenges, the Organizations would have concerns regarding any allocations of money in this manner given the limited number of users that would benefit from this action. **If any legislation is passed to address statutory restrictions and expand access to Wilderness or related management areas, it must be as cost effective as possible.**

**Another facet of our concerns regarding HR 1349 effectiveness on the ground is the fact that while many new uses would be allowed, the construction and support efforts for these efforts are not addressed by the Legislation.** As a result, any new trail being constructed after plans have been amended would have to be constructed by hand, using horses, foot or bicycles to access these areas and then removal of trees with handsaws and other manual tools and the footprint of the trail created with shovels and picks. Any maintenance would have to be provided in the same manner, and this type of maintenance has been HUGELY expensive. Given current budget challenges on public lands, the Organizations believe it makes more sense to create and maintain routes in the most efficient manner possible and this means using tools like chainsaws and trail size bulldozers for construction and maintenance. Those would remain prohibited in Wilderness areas, even if HR 1349 was passed and result in huge maintenance obligations being accepted by land managers for the benefit of a small percentage of the trails community.

**Our final concern involves the long-term impact of HR 1349 as its passage would degrade Wilderness quality and reopen discussions on new Wilderness areas.** We understand the need and reasoning for most existing Wilderness areas and would be concerned that these characteristics would be degraded with the new usages. This degraded quality may open the door for discussions around the need for new high quality Wilderness areas to replace the lost

quality. We would like to avoid discussions like that in the future as this discussion is largely settled in the western United States.

If you have questions please feel free to contact either Scott Jones, Esq. at 508 Ashford Drive, Longmont, CO 80504. His phone is (518)281-5810 and his email is [scott.jones46@yahoo.com](mailto:scott.jones46@yahoo.com) or Fred Wiley, ORBA's Executive Director at 1701 Westwind Drive #108, Bakersfield, CA. Mr. Wiley's phone number is 661-323-1464 and his email is [fwiley@orba.biz](mailto:fwiley@orba.biz).

Respectfully Submitted,



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