



H.R. 3513 – COPPER SALMON WILDERNESS ACT

FLOOR SITUATION

H.R. 3513 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Peter DeFazio (D-OR) on September 10, 2007. The House Committee on Natural Resources agreed to the bill, as amended, by voice vote on April 2, 2008.

H.R. 3513 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on April 22, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.R. 3513 designates roughly 11,922 acres of the Siskiyou National Forest in Oregon as the Copper Salmon Wilderness area, and designates about 1,700 as potential wilderness area to eventually be included as part of the Copper Salmon Wilderness Area. Additionally, the bill designates approximately 10.8 miles of the North Fork Elk and South Fork Elk Rivers as wild and scenic. These lands would be administered and regulated and preserved by the Secretary of Agriculture in accordance with the Oregon Wilderness Act of 1984 (P.L. 98-328).

BACKGROUND

The proposed Copper Salmon Wilderness Area is located in the Siskiyou National Forest in Oregon. The Area contains one of the nation's largest remaining low-elevation old-growth forests, including the last remaining Port Orford Cedar trees in the Elk River watershed. Additionally, the fisheries of the Elk River are among the best salmon and steelhead producers in the U.S.

The Wilderness Act defines lands designated as "wilderness" areas as undisturbed and undeveloped federal lands. Generally, commercial activities, motorized access, and the development of roads and structures are generally prohibited on lands designated as wilderness areas. About 29% of the land in the U.S. is federally owned, and over 17% of federally owned land has been designated as wilderness. The Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, and agencies of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture manage these 107 million acres of designated wilderness.

The designation of these lands as wilderness and potential wilderness areas amends the Oregon Wilderness Act of 1984, which was signed into law by President Reagan on June 26, 1984. The purpose of the Act was to preserve the natural state of specific lands in Oregon by designating them as protected wilderness. The designation of the North Fork Elk and South Fork Elk Rivers as wild and scenic amends the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (P.L. 92-542). Waterways designated as wild and scenic under this Act are federally protected watersheds to be preserved in their natural free flowing state.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office "estimates that enacting this legislation would have no net impact on direct spending and would not affect revenues."

STAFF CONTACT

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