

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 3—COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES

(ON BEHALF OF THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC
LANDS' SUBCOMMITTEE ON WILDERNESS AND
WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS)

FEBRUARY 11, 2003

Referred to Committee on Natural Resources

SUMMARY—Urges Congress to take certain actions concerning
wilderness areas and wilderness study areas.
(BDR R-716)

FISCAL NOTE: Effect on Local Government: No.
Effect on the State: No.

~

EXPLANATION – Matter in *bolded italics* is new; matter between brackets ~~omitted material~~ is material to be omitted.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION—Urging Congress to take certain
actions concerning wilderness areas and wilderness study
areas.

- 1 WHEREAS, The provisions of 16 U.S.C. §§ 1131 et seq.,
2 commonly referred to as the Wilderness Act, establish the National
3 Wilderness Preservation System, which consists of areas of federal
4 public land that are designated by Congress as wilderness areas; and
5 WHEREAS, Congress has designated approximately 2 million
6 acres of certain federal public lands in Nevada as wilderness areas;
7 and
8 WHEREAS, If an area of federal public land is designated as a
9 wilderness area, it must be managed in a manner that preserves the
10 wilderness character of the area and ensures that the area remains
11 unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as a wilderness area; and
12 WHEREAS, A reasonable amount of wilderness area in this state
13 provides for a diverse spectrum of recreational opportunities in
14 Nevada, promotes tourism and provides a place for Nevadans to
15 escape the pressures of urban growth; and



1 WHEREAS, In conjunction with the provisions of the Wilderness
2 Act, the Bureau of Land Management of the Department of the
3 Interior in the late 1970s conducted an initial inventory of
4 approximately 49 million acres of federal public lands in Nevada to
5 determine the suitability of such lands for designation as wilderness
6 areas or identification as wilderness study areas and, in 1980,
7 recommended that approximately 5.1 million acres of those lands be
8 identified as wilderness study areas; and

9 WHEREAS, Until a wilderness study area is designated by
10 Congress as a wilderness area or released for multiple use, the
11 wilderness study area must be managed in a manner that does not
12 impair its suitability for preservation as a wilderness area; and

13 WHEREAS, In 1991, the Bureau of Land Management
14 recommended that Congress designate as wilderness areas
15 approximately 1.9 million acres of the 5.1 million acres of
16 wilderness study areas in Nevada and release the remainder of the
17 wilderness study areas for multiple use; and

18 WHEREAS, Although Congress recently enacted the Clark
19 County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of
20 2002, Public Law 107-282 (2002), which released approximately
21 224,000 acres in Clark County from its current status as wilderness
22 study areas, the recommendations made by the Bureau of Land
23 Management in 1991 have largely not been acted upon by Congress,
24 and the Bureau continues to manage approximately 3.86 million
25 acres of federal public lands in Nevada identified as wilderness
26 study areas; and

27 WHEREAS, It is important that decisions concerning whether to
28 designate wilderness study areas as wilderness areas or release those
29 areas for multiple use are made in a timely manner without any
30 unnecessary delays as the identification of federal public lands as
31 wilderness study areas is believed to impose significant restrictions
32 on the management and use of those lands; and

33 WHEREAS, It is also important to protect the ecological health
34 and existing and potential economic and recreational benefits of
35 wilderness areas and wilderness study areas in this state by using
36 reasonable and effective methods of fire suppression in those areas;
37 and

38 WHEREAS, Because approximately 2 million acres of federal
39 public land in Nevada have been designated as wilderness areas and
40 approximately 8.6 percent of the federal public land in Nevada that
41 is managed by the Bureau of Land Management has been identified
42 as wilderness study areas and because such designation or
43 identification is believed to impose significant restrictions
44 concerning the management and use of such land, including land
45 used for mining, ranching and recreation, the Legislative



* S J R 3 R 2 *

1 Commission appointed a subcommittee in 2001 to conduct an
2 interim study of wilderness areas and wilderness study areas in this
3 state; and

4 WHEREAS, During the 2001-2002 legislative interim, the
5 subcommittee met several times throughout this state and facilitated
6 important and wide-ranging discussions among many agencies,
7 organizations and persons with diverse interests, perspectives and
8 expertise concerning wilderness areas and wilderness study areas;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, The subcommittee received a great deal of valuable
11 input from those agencies, organizations and persons, including
12 many valuable recommendations for Congress to consider in
13 addressing the issues concerning wilderness areas and wilderness
14 study areas in a responsible, reasonable and fair manner; now,
15 therefore, be it

16 RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF
17 NEVADA, JOINTLY, That the members of the Nevada Legislature
18 urge Congress to:

19 1. Support efforts to ensure that adequate access to wilderness
20 areas and wilderness study areas is afforded to the appropriate
21 agencies and persons so that those agencies and persons may
22 effectively combat fires in wilderness areas and wilderness study
23 areas;

24 2. Support the use of all reasonable and effective fire
25 suppression efforts in wilderness areas and wilderness study areas
26 without strictly confining such efforts only to the tools determined
27 by the federal agencies which manage federal public lands to be the
28 minimum tools necessary;

29 3. Accept the recommendation of the Bureau of Land
30 Management to designate 1.9 million acres of certain wilderness
31 study areas in Nevada as wilderness areas while also incorporating
32 in the designation process flexibility to consider relevant
33 information such as growth to ensure the establishment of
34 appropriate boundaries for those areas and recognizing that such
35 consideration may result in a reasonable adjustment of those
36 boundaries;

37 4. Oppose any efforts to conduct another inventory of the
38 federal public lands in Nevada for purposes of creating wilderness
39 areas or wilderness study areas without first releasing wilderness
40 study areas determined to be unsuitable for designation as
41 wilderness areas;

42 5. Ensure that more current information is considered before
43 acting on the recommendations of the Bureau of Land Management
44 concerning the designation of wilderness areas in Nevada as the



1 surveys of the Bureau were performed with limited time, resources
2 and technology; and

3 6. Avoid any unnecessary delays in releasing wilderness study
4 areas for multiple use by establishing a plan for addressing the
5 release of wilderness study areas in a timely manner that includes a
6 schedule or plan for the timely consideration of important issues
7 concerning wilderness study areas; and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of the Senate prepare and
9 transmit a copy of this resolution to the Vice President of the United
10 States as the presiding officer of the Senate, the Speaker of the
11 House of Representatives and each member of the Nevada
12 Congressional Delegation; and be it further

13 RESOLVED, That this resolution becomes effective upon
14 passage.

⑩

