

**STATEMENT OF JENNIFER EBERLIEN
ASSOCIATE DEPUTY CHIEF, NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE**

**Before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS**

**Regarding
S. 192- RIVER DEMOCRACY ACT OF 2021**

June 23, 2021

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on S.192, the “River Democracy Act of 2021.”

S. 192 would add nearly 4,700 miles of rivers and streams in Oregon and northern California to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. USDA supports wild and scenic river designations and recognizes the importance of protecting and enhancing identified river values for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations while also ensuring clean drinking water and economic vitality for all Americans. While we support the goals of this bill, we would like to work with the committee and bill sponsors to clarify timing and technical issues associated with some of the provisions and proposed designations.

Initial Agency estimates identify over 3,000 miles proposed for designation in S. 192 as flowing through National Forest System lands. This statement today pertains only to the designations that would be administered or co-administered by the Secretary of Agriculture and provisions applying to the Forest Service. We defer to the Department of the Interior on portions of the bill pertaining solely to the Department of the Interior.

USDA would like to ensure that any new designations are properly integrated into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System with enough time to develop comprehensive river management plans (CRMPs) and to establish detailed boundaries in cooperation with Tribes, State and local governments, and interested stakeholders. The timeframes identified under Sections 3(b) and 3(d) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act for completing detailed boundaries and CRMPs can be challenging to meet. We appreciate that language included in Section 5(a) of this bill to provide additional flexibility on the timeframes associated with completing CRMPs for these designations. We would like to work with the subcommittee and bill sponsors to support timely completion of CRMP and boundary requirements.

We would also welcome the opportunity to work with the subcommittee and bill sponsors to clarify the intent associated with the requirements for developing fire management plans and culturally significant native species management plans for wild and scenic rivers, as well as explore options for achieving intended outcomes. We recommend clarifying fire management planning for wild and scenic rivers be addressed through the CRMPs rather than through individual fire plans. In addition, we recommend fire management as outlined in the CRMP process, be carried out as a part of our broader fire management program.

Finally, Section 2(11) of this bill finds “the components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System within the State of Oregon have the outstandingly remarkable value of landscape connectivity [...]” While we understand that this provision alone would not add the outstandingly remarkable value of landscape connectivity to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the term “outstandingly remarkable value” has certain statutory and management implications under the Act, including the development of direction associated with each CRMP. We would like to work with the subcommittee and bill sponsors to discuss the intent and options for recognizing the importance of wild and scenic river designations to landscape connectivity.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement on this bill.

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Before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS
Regarding
S. 1317 – SUNSET CRATER VOLCANO NATIONAL MONUMENT BOUNDARY
ADJUSTMENT ACT**

June 23, 2021

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regarding S. 1317, the “Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument Boundary Adjustment Act.”

This bill modifies the boundary of the Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument in Arizona to include approximately 98 acres of identified National Forest System land immediately adjacent to the Monument. The bill transfers administrative jurisdiction over the land from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service, Coconino National Forest, to the Department of the Interior, National Park Service. The bill directs the National Park Service to administer the land as part of the Monument.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service supports the proposed boundary adjustment from the Coconino National Forest to Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument. The adjustment will allow better management of natural resources and topographic features that pertain to the Monument; provide clear jurisdiction to better serve the public; and provide a stronger basis for cooperation between the two agencies.

The Coconino National Forest land management plan allows for boundary adjustments and includes management approaches to partner with the National Park Service to study, protect, and monitor heritage resource sites, and manage recreation near the Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument. Furthermore, the land management plan Final Environmental Impact Statement noted the continued need for coordination on potential interagency land transfers in the future. The Forest Service will continue to work with the National Park Service on all desired conditions including for threatened and endangered species habitat, archeological resources, wetlands and riparian areas, and key recreation access points.

The proposed adjustment includes an administrative area that contains maintenance facilities and park housing, a National Park Service visitor center, and a section of road that connects the entrance kiosk and the administrative area to the National Monument. Because existing use authorizations by the Forest Service have allowed the National Park Service to occupy this National Forest System land for many years, we believe it is appropriate for the National Park Service to be responsible for environmental conditions existing on the transferred property.

The National Park Service currently operates under an Interagency Agreement whereby any ground disturbing activity in the administrative area requires prior approval by the Forest Service. The proposed boundary adjustment would eliminate this requirement and thus remove a significant compliance burden for both agencies. Otherwise, no existing special uses would be impacted, and Forest Service looks forward to working with the Committee to ensure multiple uses would not be affected by the proposed boundary adjustment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement on this legislation.