

S. 47, the Natural Resources Management Act **Questions and Answers**

Question: Who supports the Natural Resources Management Act?

S. 47 enjoys broad, bipartisan support both within and outside of Congress. This package of resources, parks, and water bills reflects the priorities of nearly 90 Senators. National groups ranging from the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation, the Outdoor Industry Alliance, and the National Water Resources Association to the Association of American State Geologists and the Off-Road Business Association support different parts of the compromise text. Local counties, like the Custer County Board of Commissioners, the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, and the Southwestern Water Conservation District also support various provisions in the text.

Question: How was S. 47 developed?

The bipartisan lands package is the result of extensive public process in both chambers of Congress. Almost all of the provisions within it were considered by the Senate, the House, or both legislative bodies in the 115th Congress. S. 47 is the text of the agreement that was reached by the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the House Natural Resources Committee last December. A document that lists the legislative process that each bill received is available [here](#).

Question: What is CBO’s “score” for this legislation?

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that S. 47 will reduce direct spending by about \$9 million and raise an insignificant amount of revenue over the 2019-2029 budget window.

Question: How does S. 47 support local communities and rural economies?

S. 47 highlights how the federal government is the landlord for many parts of the west, and how local communities depend on Congress to provide opportunities for economic development. For example, S. 47 includes a land conveyance for La Paz County, Arizona, to allow for development of a solar farm that will create jobs and generate renewable energy. In Custer County, South Dakota, a 360-acre land exchange will allow the County to expand its airport. Clouded title for approximately 100 private landowners will be clarified in Lake Bistineau, Louisiana. New land designations, such as Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Recreation Areas, reflect increasing interest in and the economic contributions from recreation on public lands. The lands package will also facilitate local control and responsible management of water projects.

Question: What is the balance between federal lands acquired and federal lands conveyed?

S. 47 provides for the acquisition of 2,337 acres of non-federal land. It also provides for roughly 17,780 acres of federal land to be conveyed outside of federal ownership.

Question: How does S. 47 address the Land and Water Conservation Fund?

There is broad, bipartisan, and bicameral support to permanently authorize the mechanisms that allow the U.S. Treasury to collect receipts from oil and gas leases and to deposit those revenues into the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). S. 47 does not provide mandatory funding for LWCF, but does include important reforms that will continue to expand recreational access to federal lands. It will also ensure that when new land is acquired, criteria such as geographic distribution of the parcels and the recreational value of the land is taken into consideration.

Question: How does S. 47 address requests for new national monuments?

S. 47 designates four new national monuments – three administered by the National Park Service and one administered by the U.S. Forest Service - totaling just 1,750 acres of federal land. Rather than ceding power to the executive branch to designate millions of acres as national monuments, this text reaffirms congressional authority and assures greater public process and support.

Question: Does S. 47 designate new federal wilderness?

S. 47 designates 1.3 million acres of federal wilderness in California, Utah, Oregon, and New Mexico – all the result of locally-driven proposals that have undergone extensive public process, including being considered at congressional hearings and reported from committees. The vast majority of this acreage has already been designated by the executive branch as a Wilderness Study Area (WSA), a National Monument, or an Area of Critical Environmental Concern and is treated as de facto wilderness. Congress has exclusive authority to formally designate lands as federal wilderness and can do so while providing greater balance, for example by lifting unwarranted WSAs and protecting non-wilderness uses (such as OHV recreation and military training). S. 47 contains explicit language to ensure that activities and development taking place near these new wilderness areas are not hindered or impacted.

Question: Does S. 47 release any federal wilderness study areas?

Yes. S. 47 releases approximately 168,000 acres of land from being studied for future federal wilderness designations, restoring those parcels to full, multiple-use status.

Question: Does S. 47 contain mineral withdrawals?

Yes, at Methow Valley in Washington and Emigrant Gulch and Crevice in Montana. Both withdrawals have bipartisan support in Congress and strong support at the local level. The Department of the Interior administratively withdrew the Montana lands from mineral entry for 20 years in October 2018 and has initiated a similar process for the Washington lands.

Question: Does S. 47 include new Wild and Scenic River designations?

Yes, so long as those proposals are locally supported and driven. Approximately 650 miles of river are designated as Wild and Scenic in the lands package. These designations reflect negotiations – literally down to the 1/10th of a mile – for designations in Oregon, Connecticut, California, Utah, and Massachusetts. S. 47 includes explicit language to protect private landowners from condemnation and to prohibit the implementation of buffer zones.

Question: How does S. 47 address Bureau of Reclamation title transfers?

About two-thirds of western water projects constructed under the Reclamation laws are “transferred works,” or facilities built and owned by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) but operated and maintained by local water districts, which are also responsible for repaying all capital costs. After fully repaying the federal government for initial project construction (and any subsequent capital investment), water managers are interested in obtaining title to their projects to increase access to capital markets for needed investment, reduce costs, and accelerate routine approvals. Under current law, BOR has authority to transfer responsibility for operations of these projects, but an act of Congress is required to convey physical ownership of a facility after capital repayment is complete. S. 47 authorizes BOR to transfer title to eligible transferred works (specifically excluding “reserved works” like the Hoover and Coulee dams) without further congressional action if they meet certain criteria. In addition, S. 47 specifically authorizes the transfer of certain BOR facilities in California and Oklahoma.