



**Senator John Barrasso  
Chairman  
Public Lands and Forests Subcommittee  
Legislative Hearing  
April 21, 2016**

**OPENING STATEMENT**

The Subcommittee will come to order.

The purpose of today's hearing is to receive testimony on 9 bills pending before this subcommittee.

Three of these bills designate hundreds of thousands of acres of new wilderness and add hundreds of miles of river segments to the wild and scenic river system.

These include:

- S. 1423, the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act, sponsored by Senator Boxer;
- S. 1510, the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, sponsored by Senator Murray;
- S. 1699, the Oregon Wildlands Act, sponsored by Senator Wyden.

Already, 110 million acres of land have been added to the wilderness system.

Additionally, tens of millions of acres are protected as "roadless" by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

In my view, we must take a more balanced approach between adding lands to the wilderness system and...

Congress releasing lands the agencies currently managed as wilderness study areas to be managed in accordance with land management plans.

These bills also propose to designate thousands of acres of "potential wilderness".

“Potential wilderness” gives the agency authority to remove all uses prohibited by the Wilderness Act on multiple-use lands...and provides the agency with discretionary authority, at some future date, to convert “potential wilderness” to designated wilderness without needing any additional authority or approval from Congress.

This is troubling to me as it could have far-reaching impacts for the management of our forests and public lands.

Today, we also have two Idaho bills on the agenda that revisit past wilderness and wild and scenic river designations.

Senator Crapo’s bill, S. 1167, the Owyhee Wilderness Areas Boundary Modifications Act would authorize the continued use of motorized vehicles to herd livestock in certain wilderness areas.

Senator Risch’s bill, S. 1777, would amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to maintain or replace certain facilities and structures at Smith Gulch.

In these two cases, Congress needs to provide further direction to the agencies so we can actually carry out the legislative intent.

The remaining four bills on the agenda include:

- S. 2018, to convey a federal reversionary interest in Glennallen, Alaska sponsored by Chairman Murkowski;
- S. 2223, to transfer administrative jurisdiction over certain BLM land to the VA for inclusion in the Black Hills National Cemetery sponsored by Senator Thune;
- S. 2379, to convey a federal reversionary interest to the City of Tucson sponsored by Senator Flake;
- S. 2383, to withdraw certain BLM land outside of the Utah Testing and Training Range to facilitate enhanced weapons testing and pilot training of the Air Force sponsored by Senator Hatch and Senator Lee.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here today.

Now, let me turn to Senator Wyden for his opening remarks.