

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.

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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 1.7 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, In conjunction with the provisions of the Wilderness
13 Act, the Bureau of Land Management of the Department of the
14 Interior in the late 1970s conducted an initial inventory of
15 approximately 49 million acres of federal public lands in Nevada to
16 determine the suitability of such lands for designation as wilderness



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1 areas or identification as wilderness study areas and, in 1980,
2 recommended that approximately 5.1 million acres of those lands be
3 identified as wilderness study areas; and

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

8 WHEREAS, In 1991, the Bureau of Land Management
9 recommended that Congress designate as wilderness areas
10 approximately 1.9 million acres of the 5.1 million acres of
11 wilderness study areas in Nevada and release the remainder of the
12 wilderness study areas for multiple use; and

13 WHEREAS, Although Congress recently enacted the Clark
14 County Conservation of Public Land and Natural Resources Act of
15 2002, Public Law 107-282 (2002), which released approximately
16 224,000 acres in Clark County from its current status as wilderness
17 study areas, the recommendations made by the Bureau of Land
18 Management in 1991 have largely not been acted upon by Congress,
19 and the Bureau continues to manage approximately 5 million acres
20 of federal public lands in Nevada identified as wilderness study
21 areas; and

22 WHEREAS, It is important that decisions concerning whether to
23 designate wilderness study areas as wilderness areas or release those
24 areas for multiple use are made in a timely manner without any
25 unnecessary delays as the identification of federal public lands as
26 wilderness study areas imposes significant restrictions on the
27 management and use of those lands; and

28 WHEREAS, It is also important to protect the ecological health
29 and existing and potential economic and recreational benefits of
30 wilderness areas and wilderness study areas in this state by using
31 reasonable and effective methods of fire suppression in those areas;
32 and

33 WHEREAS, Because a considerable amount of federal public
34 land in Nevada has been designated as wilderness areas or identified
35 as wilderness study areas and because such designation or
36 identification imposes significant restrictions concerning the
37 management and use of such land, including land used for mining,
38 ranching and recreation, the Legislative Commission appointed a
39 subcommittee in 2001 to conduct an interim study of wilderness
40 areas and wilderness study areas in this state; and

41 WHEREAS, During the 2001-2002 legislative interim, the
42 subcommittee met several times throughout this state and facilitated
43 important and wide-ranging discussions among many agencies,
44 organizations and persons with diverse interests, perspectives and



1 expertise concerning wilderness areas and wilderness study areas;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, The subcommittee received a great deal of valuable
4 input from those agencies, organizations and persons, including
5 many valuable recommendations for Congress to consider in
6 addressing the issues concerning wilderness areas and wilderness
7 study areas in a responsible, reasonable and fair manner; now,
8 therefore, be it

9 RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF
10 NEVADA, JOINTLY, That the members of the Nevada Legislature
11 urge Congress to:

12 1. Support efforts to ensure that adequate access to wilderness
13 areas and wilderness study areas is afforded to the appropriate
14 agencies and persons so that those agencies and persons may
15 effectively combat fires in wilderness areas and wilderness study
16 areas;

17 2. Support the use of all reasonable and effective fire
18 suppression efforts in wilderness areas and wilderness study areas
19 without strictly confining such efforts only to the tools determined
20 by the federal agencies which manage federal public lands to be the
21 minimum tools necessary;

22 3. Accept the recommendation of the Bureau of Land
23 Management to designate 1.9 million acres of certain wilderness
24 study areas in Nevada as wilderness areas while also incorporating
25 in the designation process flexibility to consider relevant
26 information such as growth to ensure the establishment of
27 appropriate boundaries for those areas and recognizing that such
28 consideration may result in a reasonable adjustment of those
29 boundaries;

30 4. Oppose any efforts to conduct another inventory of the
31 federal public lands in Nevada for purposes of creating wilderness
32 areas or wilderness study areas;

33 5. Ensure that more current information is considered before
34 acting on the recommendations of the Bureau of Land Management
35 concerning the designation of wilderness areas in Nevada as the
36 surveys of the Bureau were performed with limited time, resources
37 and technology; and

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

43 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of the Senate prepare and
44 transmit a copy of this resolution to the Vice President of the United
45 States as the presiding officer of the Senate, the Speaker of the



1 House of Representatives and each member of the Nevada
2 Congressional Delegation; and be it further
3 RESOLVED, That this resolution becomes effective upon
4 passage.

