

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4870

To amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate certain streams in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem in the State of Montana as components of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 1, 2025

Mr. ZINKE introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate certain streams in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem in the State of Montana as components of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Greater Yellowstone
5 Recreation Enhancement And Tourism Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS; PURPOSE.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

1 (1) the streams designated as components of
2 the Wild and Scenic Rivers System by the amend-
3 ment made by section 3(a) are cherished by the peo-
4 ple of the State of Montana and visitors from across
5 the United States and around the world for their
6 clean water, abundant fish and wildlife, spectacular
7 natural settings, and outstanding recreational oppor-
8 tunities;

9 (2) Indian Tribes have used the streams re-
10 ferred to in paragraph (1) for hunting, fishing, gath-
11 ering, and other cultural purposes since time imme-
12 morial;

13 (3) recreational activities (including fishing,
14 hunting, camping, paddling, hiking, swimming, rock
15 climbing, horseback riding, and wildlife watching) on
16 the streams referred to in paragraph (1) and the
17 surrounding land generate billions of dollars annu-
18 ally for the economy of the State of Montana;

19 (4) the multi-billion-dollar agricultural industry
20 in the State of Montana thrives on the availability
21 of clean water that originates in headwaters streams
22 on Federal public land;

23 (5) facilities on the Madison River, the Gibson
24 and Madison Dams, have been integral in improving
25 and maintaining fish populations, enabling its blue-

1 ribbon fishery values, while generating 12 MW of
2 carbon free hydropower;

3 (6) the streams referred to in paragraph (1)—

4 (A) are national treasures;

5 (B) possess outstandingly remarkable val-
6 ues; and

7 (C) merit the high level of protection af-
8 forded by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16
9 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.) in order to maintain the
10 benefits provided by the streams described in
11 paragraphs (1) through (3) for future genera-
12 tions to enjoy; and

13 (7) designation of select public land segments of
14 the streams referred to in paragraph (1) under the
15 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.)
16 would maintain the outstandingly remarkable values
17 of each stream while—

18 (A) preserving public access;

19 (B) respecting private property rights;

20 (C) allowing appropriate maintenance of
21 existing infrastructure, including major repairs
22 and safety improvements to roads and bridges;

23 (D) allowing for emergency intervention;

24 and

25 (E) allowing historical uses to continue.

1 (b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to des-
 2 ignate certain segments of the Gallatin, Madison, and Yel-
 3 lowstone Rivers and their select tributaries in the Greater
 4 Yellowstone Ecosystem in the State of Montana as compo-
 5 nents of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System to
 6 preserve and protect for present and future generations
 7 the outstandingly remarkable values of each stream and
 8 tributary.

9 **SEC. 3. DESIGNATION OF WILD AND SCENIC RIVER SEG-**
 10 **MENTS.**

11 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3(a) of the Wild and Sce-
 12 nic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1274(a)) is amended by adding
 13 at the end the following:

14 “(233) MADISON RIVER, MONTANA.—The ap-
 15 proximately 42-mile segment of the Madison River
 16 in the State of Montana from the confluence of
 17 Cabin Creek downstream to the point at which the
 18 river leaves Bureau of Land Management land at
 19 the north boundary of T. 8 S., R. 1 W., sec. 10, ap-
 20 proximately 1 mile north of the confluence of Cherry
 21 Creek, to be administered by the Secretary of Agri-
 22 culture as a recreational river.

23 “(234) GALLATIN RIVER, MONTANA.—The ap-
 24 proximately 39.5-mile segment of the Gallatin River
 25 in the State of Montana from the Yellowstone Na-

1 tional Park boundary downstream to the confluence
2 of Spanish Creek, to be administered by the Sec-
3 retary of Agriculture as a recreational river.

4 “(235) HYALITE CREEK, MONTANA.—The ap-
5 proximately 4.6-mile segment of Hyalite Creek in
6 the State of Montana from the source in the Gal-
7 latin Range downstream to Grotto Falls Trailhead,
8 to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture
9 as a scenic river.

10 “(236) CABIN CREEK, MONTANA.—The approxi-
11 mately 7.3-mile segment of Cabin Creek in the State
12 of Montana from the source in the Madison Range
13 downstream to above the fish barrier, to be adminis-
14 tered by the Secretary of Agriculture as a scenic
15 river.

16 “(237) MIDDLE FORK OF CABIN CREEK, MON-
17 TANA.—The approximately 5.1-mile segment of the
18 Middle Fork of Cabin Creek in the State of Montana
19 from the source in the Madison Range downstream
20 to the confluence with Cabin Creek, to be adminis-
21 tered by the Secretary of Agriculture as a scenic
22 river.”.

23 (b) CONSENT OF OWNER OF LAND REQUIRED.—No
24 land or interest in land located within the boundary of
25 a covered segment may be acquired by the Secretary of

1 Agriculture without the consent of the owner of the land
2 or interest in land.

3 (c) EFFECT OF DESIGNATIONS ON WATER
4 RIGHTS.—Nothing in this Act or an amendment made by
5 this Act affects valid existing rights, including—

- 6 (1) Federal, Tribal, and interstate water com-
7 pacts in existence on the date of enactment of this
8 Act (including full development of any apportion-
9 ment made in accordance with the compacts);
- 10 (2) water rights in the State of Montana; and
- 11 (3) water rights held by the United States.

12 (d) EFFECT OF DESIGNATIONS ON HEBGEN AND
13 MADISON DEVELOPMENTS.—

14 (1) HEBGEN DAM AND RESERVOIR AND MADI-
15 SON DAM AND RESERVOIR.—The Hebgen Dam and
16 Reservoir and the Madison Dam and Reservoir are
17 located entirely outside of the covered segments, and
18 these dams (including all aspects of their facilities
19 and operations) are compatible with the designation
20 made by the amendments made by subsection (a).

21 (2) EFFECTS ON CURRENT AND FUTURE HY-
22 DROELECTRIC FACILITIES.—

23 (A) IN GENERAL.—The designation of the
24 river segments by the amendments made by
25 subsection (a) shall not—

1 (i) impact or alter the existing terms
2 of permitting, licensing, or operation of—

3 (I) the Hebgen Dam located on
4 the Upper Madison River in Montana
5 (FERC P-2188); or

6 (II) the Madison Dam located
7 near Ennis, Montana (FERC P-
8 2188); or

9 (ii) preclude the Federal Energy Reg-
10 ulatory Commission from licensing, reli-
11 censing, or otherwise authorizing the oper-
12 ation or continued operation of the facili-
13 ties named in clause (i).

14 (B) HYDROPOWER GENERATION.—Nothing
15 in this Act abrogates adding hydropower gen-
16 eration facilities to the Hebgen Dam.

17 (3) LICENSING AND EXPANSION.—Notwith-
18 standing Section 7(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers
19 Act, section 4(e) of the Federal Power Act shall gov-
20 ern the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission con-
21 sideration of licenses, relicenses, or expansion of the
22 Hebgen and Madison Developments.

23 (4) LIMITATION.—The Hebgen and Madison
24 Developments shall not be expanded to the area
25 within the covered segments.

1 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
2 are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are nec-
3 essary to carry out this Act, including the amendments
4 made by this Act.

5 (f) COVERED SEGMENT DEFINED.—The term “cov-
6 ered segment” means a river segment designated by para-
7 graphs (233) through (237) of section 3(a) of the Wild
8 and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1274(a)) (as amended
9 by subsection (a) of this section).

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