

**H.R. 5151, WILD MONONGAHELA
ACT: A NATIONAL LEGACY FOR
WEST VIRGINIA'S SPECIAL PLACES**

LEGISLATIVE HEARING

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS
AND PUBLIC LANDS
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION

Tuesday, February 26, 2008

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CONTENTS

	Page
Hearing held on Tuesday, February 26, 2008	1
Statement of Members:	
Bishop, Hon. Rob, a Representative in Congress from the State of Utah ...	4
Prepared statement of	4
Grijalva, Hon. Raúl M., a Representative in Congress from the State of Arizona	1
Prepared statement of	2
Rahall, Hon. Nick J., II, a Representative in Congress from the State of West Virginia	3
Statement of Witnesses:	
Bittner, Robert, Member, Board of Directors, Mountaineer Chapter of Trout Unlimited	23
Prepared statement of	25
Holtrop, Joel, Deputy Chief, National Forest System, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture	5
Prepared statement of	6
Manchester, Hon. John, Mayor, City of Lewisburg, West Virginia	10
Prepared statement of	12
Price, Michael, President, USW Local 8-89, AFL-CIO	19
Prepared statement of	20
Two Resolutions submitted for the record	22
Sparks, Rev. Dennis, Executive Director, West Virginia Council of Churches	14
Prepared statement of	15
Willis, Gil, Owner and Operator, Elk River Touring Center/Elk River Inn and Restaurant, Slatyfork, West Virginia	26
Prepared statement of	28

**LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON H.R. 5151, TO
DESIGNATE AS WILDERNESS ADDITIONAL
NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LANDS IN THE
MONONGAHELA NATIONAL FOREST IN THE
STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES. (WILD MONONGAHELA ACT: A
NATIONAL LEGACY FOR WEST VIRGINIA'S
SPECIAL PLACES)**

**Tuesday, February 26, 2008
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, D.C.**

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:04 a.m. in Room 1324, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Raúl M. Grijalva, [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Grijalva, Bishop and Rahall.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARIZONA

Mr. GRIJALVA. Let me call the Subcommittee to order. Today we will be receiving testimony on H.R. 5151, the Wild Monongahela Act. I would like to thank all our witnesses for being here today and look forward to their testimony. H.R. 5151, introduced by Chairman Nick Rahall, designates approximately 40,000 acres of national forest land in West Virginia as wilderness.

This includes three additions to existing wilderness areas and four new wilderness areas. H.R. 5151 includes some of the wildest and most wonderful areas in the wild and wonderful State of West Virginia, including critical habitats for various rare and threatened species, key areas of trout and small-mouth bass fishing, majestic plateaus and valleys, and excellent opportunities for recreation.

Our full Committee Chairman is to be commended for his fine work on this measure. Chairman Rahall and I share a strong commitment to protecting our nation's truly wild places. Passage of the Wilderness Act and subsequent statutes establish the preservation of wilderness as one of the fundamental purposes of Federal land management and one of the most important areas of jurisdiction of this Subcommittee.

Those who have worked on wilderness bills know that good wilderness proposals require compromise. Input from the agencies which manage our Federal lands is important. The Wilderness Act is very clear. Congress retains sole authority to designate wilder-

ness. In practice, this means that a successful wilderness bill will be a consensus proposal, taking into account input from all relevant stakeholders.

The measure before us today is such a proposal. In considering this and other wilderness bills, we should be careful to understand exactly what wilderness means and what it does not mean. For example, there are those who claim wilderness designations somehow conflict with the multiple use mandate of the National Forest System.

In truth, wilderness is a multiple use resource. In fact, Congress affirmed the Wilderness Act and the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act. Uses in wilderness include wildlife and watershed protection, hunting, fishing, recreation, grazing and even mining under certain circumstances. Another misconception is that wilderness somehow hinders fire management.

The fact is the Wilderness Act could not be any more clear. Federal agencies may take such measures as may be necessary in the control of fire, insects and disease. Federal agencies are allowed to use airplanes, helicopters, bulldozers, fire trucks, chainsaws and other equipment they need to fight fires or to manage flammable vegetation.

Fire is not a valid excuse for failing to designate wilderness. In the end, wilderness is not defined by the absence of certain activities, but rather by the presence of certain unique and invaluable characteristics. The answer to the often asked question why do you want this area to be wilderness is these areas are already wilderness.

We simply want to preserve them as they are and as they have been for generations. At this point, let me turn to the Chairman of the Committee and the sponsor of the legislation, Mr. Rahall, for any statements he may have.

Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Grijalva follows:]

**Statement of The Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Chairman,
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands**

The Subcommittee will come to order.

Today we will be receiving testimony on H.R. 5151, the Wild Monongahela Act. I would like to thank all of our witnesses for being here today and look forward to their testimony.

H.R. 5151, introduced by Chairman Nick Rahall, designates approximately 47,000 acres of National Forest land in West Virginia as wilderness. This includes three additions to existing wilderness areas, and four new wilderness areas.

H.R. 5151 includes some of the wildest and most wonderful areas in the wild and wonderful State of West Virginia, including critical habitat for various rare and threatened species, key areas for trout and small-mouth bass fishing, majestic plateaus and valleys and excellent opportunities for recreation.

Our full Committee Chairman is to be commended for his fine work on this measure. Chairman Rahall and I share a strong commitment to protecting our nation's truly wild places. Passage of the Wilderness Act, and subsequent statutes, established preservation of wilderness as one of the fundamental purposes of federal land management and one of the most important areas of jurisdiction of this subcommittee.

Those who have worked on wilderness bills know that good wilderness proposals require compromise. Input from the agencies which manage our federal lands is important but the Wilderness Act is clear—Congress retains sole authority to designate wilderness. In practice, this means that a successful wilderness bill will be a consensus proposal, taking into account input from all relevant stakeholders. The measure before us today is such a proposal.

In considering this and other wilderness bills, we should be careful to understand exactly what wilderness means—and what it does not mean. For example, there are those who claim wilderness designations somehow conflict with the multiple use mandate of the National Forest System. In truth, wilderness is a multiple use resource—a fact Congress affirmed in the Wilderness Act and the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act. Uses in wilderness include wildlife and watershed protection, hunting, fishing, recreation, grazing, and even mining, under certain circumstances.

Another misconception is that wilderness somehow hinders fire management. The fact is, the Wilderness Act could not be more clear: “Federal agencies may take such measures as may be necessary in the control of fire, insects, and diseases.” Federal agencies are allowed to use airplanes, helicopters, bulldozers, fire trucks, chain saws and any other equipment they need to fight fires OR to manage flammable vegetation. Fire is not a valid excuse for failing to designate wilderness.

In the end, wilderness is not defined by the absence of certain activities but rather by the presence of certain unique and invaluable characteristics. The answer to the often-asked question, “why do you want this area to be wilderness?” is, these areas already are wilderness, we simply want to preserve them as they are and as they have been for generations.

I’d now like to recognize Chairman Nick Rahall, the sponsor of this bill, for any statement he may have.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE NICK J. RAHALL, II, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WEST
VIRGINIA**

Mr. RAHALL. Thank you, Chairman Grijalva. I appreciate you and Ranking Member Bishop for reserving some of this important Subcommittee’s valuable time for the purpose of holding a hearing on legislation to designate new wilderness areas within the Monongahela National Forest. The Wild Monongahela Act was introduced in the House by Representatives Mollohan, Capito and myself, and in the Senate by Senators Byrd and Rockefeller.

This bill is truly about the heart and soul of West Virginia. As West Virginians, we are intimately connected to our land. Our roots are planted deeply in our misty hollows and our majestic mountains.

We know that we will be judged by future generations on our stewardship of this land that is West Virginia, and so I believe that it is of paramount importance that we once again set aside some of God’s handiwork in our forests by preserving these Federal lands in their pristine state.

I want to thank those West Virginians who are with us today. My good friend, the Mayor of Lewisburg, John Manchester, is here to discuss how many communities view wilderness as an engine of economic development. Also with us is The Reverend Dennis Sparks with the West Virginia Council of Churches.

Reverend Sparks has compiled a wonderful brochure describing how in wilderness we learn about God, how we cultivate our communities and how we cleanse our minds and our spirits. The working men and women of West Virginia are represented today by Mike Price with the AFL-CIO, which has endorsed a resolution supporting new wilderness in the State.

Also here today is Bob Bittner, Jr., who is representing Trout Unlimited and West Virginia’s avid anglers. I am also pleased that Gil Willis is able to join us representing businesses who depend on outdoor recreation for their livelihood. There are several other West Virginians who have traveled to our nation’s capital today to attend

this hearing, and I want to thank them as well for all their hard work on this legislation.

I have hiked with many of them in many parts of this proposed area—in some parts, not many. It is a very big area, and I have not done many parts of it, but I have done a small part. Last, but certainly not least, while he is not a witness, in the audience is the distinguished and highly capable supervisor of our Monongahela National Forest, Clyde Thompson.

So I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, again for having this hearing, and Ranking Member Bishop, and thank you for recognizing me.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Chairman, let me turn to our Ranking Member, Mr. Bishop, for any statement he may have.

Sir.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ROB BISHOP, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF UTAH**

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you, Chairman Grijalva and Chairman Rahall. I appreciate this opportunity of being here and listening to the discussion about wild and wonderful West Virginia. You did not tell which of our Representatives from West Virginia are wild and which ones are wonderful, but I am assuming you will do that as time goes on.

If it is OK, I would ask unanimous consent that a full and complete statement be entered into the record. I will say that you seem in first blush to have a bill that has the unanimous support of the House delegation that has been studied by the Forest Service in the seven areas that are mentioned in this bill with a few minor adjustments seem to have gone through a rigorous study.

As long as this bill that we have before us that was introduced that is unanimously supported seems to have cleared a lot of the hurdles it could easily be done.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Mr. Bishop. Without objection, the material is entered into the record.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bishop follows:]

**Statement of The Honorable Rob Bishop, a Representative in Congress
from the State of Utah**

My general approach to wilderness bills and other designations that result in highly restrictive land use policies is that we should first make sure that we are not foreclosing future access to resources that may be critically important to our national well-being and second, that we show some deference to the people who live in the area and are most affected by these decisions.

Those of us who live in the western public land states know that Washington politicians and bureaucrats can be very generous in giving in to the demands of environmental special interest groups at the expense of local people whose daily lives and whose ability to provide for their families can be devastated by such federal actions.

Sometimes we enact “feel good” bills and only later discover the unanticipated, real world side-effects. Therefore, I look forward to hearing today’s testimony and I thank the panel members for their willingness to give us their thoughts on this bill and to answer our questions.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Let me call our first panelists up if we may. For this panel, as well as the second set of panelists, your statement in its entirety will be entered into the record. Any additional mate-

rials you want to add will also be entered into the record. We have five minutes for your testimony.

With that, let me introduce the Deputy Chief, national Forest System, Mr. Holtrop, who has been with us before. Welcome back, sir, and with that, your testimony, sir.

**STATEMENT OF JOEL HOLTROP, DEPUTY CHIEF,
NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM, USDA FOREST SERVICE**

Mr. HOLTROP. Mr. Chairman, thank you. Chairman Rahall, Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop, it is my privilege to be able to submit my formal testimony for the record, but I want to sum that up very briefly by making a few key points. I would like to start off by expressing my personal appreciation and administration's appreciation to you for this bill because it allows us to focus on something that we at the Forest Service care very deeply about and that is wilderness.

The Forest Service has a long history of establishing areas that should be managed for their wild character. We have a long history of managing wildernesses that sustain those wilderness qualities, and we are proud of that long history.

Mr. Chairman, I took an opportunity just a few weeks ago to visit some of the areas, many of the areas, that are proposed in this bill. I saw and visited four of the areas of the seven that are being proposed, and I can tell you that they do have a special wildness about them that Americans should be able to enjoy for generations to come.

In 2006, the Monongahela National Forest recommended wilderness designation for four of these areas: Cheat Mountain, Cranberry Expansion, Dry Fork Expansion and Roaring Plains West. These areas have outstanding wilderness attributes, and the administration strongly supports their wilderness designation.

We commend the sponsors for including them in this bill. We also appreciate the wilderness attributes of the other three areas in this bill: Big Draft, the Dolly Sods Expansion and Spice Run. The Monongahela National Forest evaluated these areas as part of its forest plan revision, and we came to the conclusion that these three areas meet the criteria for wilderness.

To protect their wilderness attributes while striking a balance among multiple uses we designated these three areas as semiprimitive, nonmotorized areas. Semiprimitive, nonmotorized is one of the most restricted allocations the Forest Service can give, and we have no objection to designating these three areas as wilderness.

We do have a few concerns about some of the proposed wilderness boundaries, but we are confident that they can be fixed through adjustments that are mostly minor. For example, we have some campgrounds that should be adjusted away from the wilderness boundary, power line corridors that we should provide some buffer between the power line and the wilderness and perhaps the biggest adjustment might be to the Spice Run proposed area.

The southwestern corner of Spice Run, a 974 acre area, was not evaluated for wilderness in the forest plan, and if motorized access issues were to come up on three parcels of private land in that portion of the Spice Run area, that would create some issues for us.

Again, we feel that we have some minor boundary adjustments that we think are consistent with the spirit of this wilderness bill that would accomplish a lot of the management concerns that we have around a few of these minor boundaries. We would appreciate the opportunity to present those boundary proposals and to work with the Subcommittee on that issue.

I have been hiking, and camping and climbing in wilderness for as long as I can remember. My family and my agency are passionate about wilderness. The Forest Service is charged with stewardship for 407 wilderness areas, and that is a third of the national wilderness preservation system. Together with America's other wilderness stewards we are dedicated to protecting and managing America's wildest lands.

We strongly support the spirit of this bill, and we are confident that working together we can arrive at final wilderness boundaries that are sound and manageable. I am pleased to be able to represent Forest Supervisor Clyde Thompson and other members of the staff at the Monongahela National Forest who are here with us today and all of the people of West Virginia in looking forward to a good resolution to this issue.

I am pleased to be able to answer any questions that you might have at this time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Holtrop follows:]

**Statement of Joel Holtrop, Deputy Chief for the National Forest System,
U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture**

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to provide the Administration's view on the Wild Monongahela Act: A National Legacy for West Virginia's Special Places.

H.R. 5151 would designate about 47,128 acres of the Monongahela National Forest as wilderness, adding to three existing wilderness areas and designating four new ones. The Administration supports designation of Cheat Mountain, Cranberry Expansion, Dry Fork Expansion, and Roaring Plains West as wilderness. For all four areas, wilderness designation would be consistent with recommendations by the Monongahela National Forest in its 2006 forest plan revision.

We do not object to wilderness designation for the other three areas proposed by the bill. In the environmental impact statement that accompanied the 2006 forest plan revision, the Monongahela National Forest determined that Big Draft, the Dolly Sods Expansion, and Spice Run are all available for wilderness designation. The Monongahela National Forest designated all three areas as "semiprimitive non-motorized" in order to help maintain their roadless attributes over time while still permitting other established uses.

The Monongahela National Forest has five existing wilderness areas, all of which offer outstanding wilderness experiences. I have personally visited some of the seven areas proposed in this bill, and I believe that all seven areas have outstanding wilderness attributes. All are rugged forested land minimally affected by outside forces, with natural processes operating and vestiges of human impacts (such as old roads and clearcuts) rapidly healing over. Ranging in elevation from just under 2,000 feet to over 4,000 feet, these landscapes harbor rare ecosystems (such as high-elevation red spruce) and habitat for federally listed species.

That is why the Monongahela National Forest recommended four of the seven areas for wilderness study in its revised forest plan in 2006: Cheat Mountain, Cranberry Expansion, Dry Fork Expansion, and Roaring Plains West. These units represent nearly 27,700 acres recommended for wilderness study. The Administration supports their inclusion in this bill.

In its forest plan revision, after consulting with the public, the Monongahela National Forest decided not to include Big Draft, the Dolly Sods Expansion, and Spice Run among the areas recommended for wilderness. Instead, we designated all three as semiprimitive nonmotorized areas, one of the most restrictive allocations that the Forest Service can give. This management prescription protects their naturalness

while permitting such popular and relatively low-impact uses as mountain biking. It also allows the manipulation of vegetation to create wildlife openings.

However, we recognize the wilderness eligibility of all three areas, and their designation as wilderness would be consistent with values that the Monongahela National Forest's revised forest plan is designed to protect. In other locations, the Monongahela National Forest maintains opportunities for mountain biking and for manipulating vegetation to improve wildlife habitat. Therefore, the Administration would not object to including Big Draft, the Dolly Sods Expansion, and Spice Run in this bill if boundary adjustments and other issues are addressed.

If all seven areas are designated as wilderness, we would suggest adjusting some of the proposed boundaries to avoid conflicts and make the wilderness areas more manageable. Some proposed boundaries appear to be based on the boundaries of the roadless areas analyzed during the 2006 forest plan revision. Those roadless area boundaries were not intended to define wilderness boundaries. Adjustments should be made to account for mapping errors; to provide access to state and private land; to exclude developed sites and managed wildlife openings; to add offsets for powerlines and other features inconsistent with wilderness; and to align the boundaries with existing wilderness boundaries.

The largest boundary question regards the southwestern corner of the proposed Spice Run unit, an area of 974 acres. This area lies outside the area that the Monongahela National Forest evaluated for wilderness in its 2006 forest plan because it did not meet the criteria for roadless areas. Should it become designated wilderness, motorized access to three adjacent parcels of private land could become an issue.

We would like to work with the bill's sponsors and the subcommittee to adjust the boundaries to accommodate these and other concerns. The Forest Service has prepared a set of proposed boundary adjustments, taking care to ensure that our proposed adjustments would not detract from the overall wilderness legislation. We would welcome the opportunity to provide this information to the subcommittee.

Removing most of the structures incompatible with wilderness would not be necessary if our proposed boundary adjustments were made. Even with the adjustments, however, a hiking shelter and about 9 miles of road would remain within the wilderness boundaries. The shelter would likely be allowed to deteriorate and then removed. Unless converted to trails, the roads (currently closed to vehicular traffic) would require decommissioning to protect water quality and other natural resource values. The Monongahela National Forest would conduct an analysis to determine the appropriate management actions and then make the investments needed, subject to available appropriations, to remove culverts, construct trail, or contour the land to reduce erosion.

We strongly support the spirit of this legislation, and we confirm that all seven areas proposed for wilderness designation meet the criteria for wilderness. Working with the subcommittee, we are confident that we can remedy boundary deficiencies and establish final wilderness boundaries that are sound and manageable.

This concludes my prepared statement, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much, sir. Thank you for your positive testimony today. You have mentioned in your testimony many of these areas were recommended as wilderness under the forest plan, and the others are currently managed as semiprimitive, nonmotorized areas. Could you give us a definition of semiprimitive, nonmotorized areas?

Mr. HOLTROP. I can. It is very restrictive allocation of land in the forest plan. It is an area that is being managed for disbursed recreation opportunities, back country type opportunities, and it is an administrative designation as opposed to a legislative designation, and it does allow some minimum additional uses such as mountain biking and some of those types of activities and perhaps some wildlife opening work.

Those were some of the issues, multiple uses, that we were looking at that led to that designation in the forest plan.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. One last question. You raise the issue of removing culverts on page 4 of your testimony. Would the min-

imum tools policy already in the Wilderness Act allow you to remove the culverts if necessary in these wilderness areas?

Mr. HOLTROP. Yes, it would. If that is the approach that we would need to take. If the areas were designated wilderness, and we had culverts that we felt needed to be removed, we would do a minimum tools analysis and do whatever was necessary to protect the resource.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Mr. Bishop.

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Holtrop, appreciate you being here again. I am looking at a map right now of these proposed areas. Can you just tell me the names of the four areas that were recommended by the Forest Service to be wilderness?

Mr. HOLTROP. Yes, I can. It is Cheat Mountain, the Cranberry Expansion, the Dry Fork Expansion and Roaring Plains West.

Mr. BISHOP. And the three areas that you say have some characteristics but are to be added as well would be the Spice Run and Big Draft?

Mr. HOLTROP. Spice Run, Big Draft and the Dolly Sods North.

Mr. BISHOP. OK. Did you do a complete inventory of all the forest lands that you have in this area?

Mr. HOLTROP. Yes, we did.

Mr. BISHOP. And you are satisfied that these seven fit those requirements?

Mr. HOLTROP. Yes. Through the forest planning process we looked at a total of 18 roadless areas, these seven being seven of those 18, and so I am very satisfied that as we went through that analysis that these areas do meet the requirements of wilderness.

Mr. BISHOP. I guess if you had recommended four only then there probably are not a whole lot of others that would be coming even close to that kind of category, right?

Mr. HOLTROP. Of the roadless areas that were analyzed through the forest planning process many of them had wilderness characteristics and ended up with a designation in the forest plan again of the semiprimitive, nonmotorized to protect that wild nature.

Again, the reasons for not proposing them for wilderness had more to do with existing uses or opportunities for other uses that through the public process involved in that forest plan process it seemed like that was the right place for us to go.

However, as the testimony mentions, the purposes of the forest plan are largely met with a wilderness designation in these three areas, and we would need to find opportunities for those uses in other areas in the forests, and we would be committed to doing so.

Mr. BISHOP. Well, the original definition of wilderness in the original act was simply untrampled by human man. Even though one of those areas does have a shed and a road, that is close enough for government work, right? Let me ask you a better question than that one.

Mr. HOLTROP. I would appreciate that.

Mr. BISHOP. That was rhetorical anyway. Are there any areas within these proposed wilderness boundaries that have been acquired or have been improved with funds from duck stamps or the excise tax on hunting and fishing through acts like Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson?

Mr. HOLTROP. I am sorry.

Mr. BISHOP. Are there any areas of the proposed wilderness boundaries, these seven sections, that were either acquired or improved from funds that came from duck stamps or the excise tax on hunting and fishing through bills like the Pittman-Robertson bill and the Dingell-Johnson bill?

Mr. HOLTROP. I don't have the answer to that question. Be more than happy to get an answer for that for the record.

Mr. BISHOP. And if it is not, that is not an issue. If it is, and those monies were specifically taken for management purposes, how does that impact if wilderness therefore lacks the kind of management purposes for which that money was acquired and which that money—that money is not going to be used if the management style does not fit into the concept of wilderness, so would that have an impact on the decision if indeed any of those lands were acquired through that means of funding?

Mr. HOLTROP. I would have to look into that a little bit more than I am feeling comfortable in responding to that right now. There is plenty of hunting opportunities within wilderness, so I am not absolutely certain that I would say that would be inconsistent with the purposes of—

Mr. BISHOP. Yes, and I don't think it would prohibit any kind hunting activity. It would be the management activities of the Forest Service that may have some kind of impact. We have plenty of time to look at that between now and the bill further moving through this session, so if you could look at that I would appreciate it.

Mr. HOLTROP. Be happy to do that.

Mr. BISHOP. I will yield back or I will yield to you, sure.

Mr. RAHALL. Appreciate the gentleman from Utah yielding. In response to your question, it is my understanding that no funds from those acts that you mentioned were used for acquisition of these proposed wilderness areas, but rather the funds were created by the Weeks Act of 1911, as were most all of the wilderness areas in the east. I believe that is my understanding of it.

Mr. HOLTROP. The vast majority of the National Forest System lands in the east were acquired through the Weeks Act. That is correct.

Mr. BISHOP. I appreciate it. That may well be the case and may be a moot issue, but if you could give me some further detail on that I would be appreciative. Thank you, sir.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Mr. Bishop. Mr. Chairman, any questions?

Mr. RAHALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just one question. I know the answer to it, but I want to be clear and get it on the record anyway. I am sure that you are aware that the Governor of West Virginia now has a proposal to designate about 4,000 acres more of wilderness in what is in the delegations' bill.

The Governor supports five of the seven areas in the delegations' bill, but he would drop Cheat Mountain and Spice Run, and he would add three more areas, Roaring Plains East and North and a portion of Seneca Creek. As I said, I know the answer to the question but, for the record, were these three areas considered by the Forest Service as part of the roadless review for their wilderness potential as part of the planning process?

Mr. HOLTROP. Yes, they were. Those are three of the 18 areas that I referred to earlier. Through the forest plan designation process each of them were designated for the semiprimitive, non-motorized.

Mr. RAHALL. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. If there is no further questions from my colleagues, thank you very much for your testimony. Appreciate it.

Mr. HOLTROP. Thank you very much.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Let me call the next panel up. The Honorable John Manchester, Mayor, City of Lewisburg; Reverend Dennis Sparks, Executive Director, West Virginia Council of Churches; Mr. Mike Price, West Virginia AFL-CIO; Mr. Bob Bittner, Jr., Mountaineer Chapter of Trout Unlimited; Mr. Gil Willis, Elk River Inn & Restaurant. Gentlemen.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Chairman?

Mr. GRIJALVA. Yes, sir?

Mr. RAHALL. If I may just for a moment while they are taking their seats. These are a few of the West Virginians that I recognized in my opening comments.

There are many other West Virginians in attendance, I might add, and I know I still will miss some, but I do want to recognize Mary Whimer and Beth Whittle, David Seville, Matt Keller, many of these individuals with whom, including the Mayor of Lewisburg, I hiked portions of the Big Draft a year or two ago.

I want to welcome them, as well as those I have missed, to this Subcommittee hearing this morning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me begin with The Honorable John Manchester for his testimony.

Mayor.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOHN MANCHESTER,
MAYOR, CITY OF LEWISBURG**

Mr. MANCHESTER. Mr. Chairman, Congressman Rahall, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, good morning. My name is John Manchester, and I am Mayor of Lewisburg, West Virginia, a small city of 3,700 people just a few miles from the southern end of the Monongahela National Forest in the southeastern part of the state.

I am speaking in favor of H.R. 5151, the Wild Monongahela Act, and I appreciate the opportunity to be with you today. As I am sure you have heard regularly from Congressman Rahall and the other Members of the West Virginia congressional delegation, West Virginia is a unique place with unique people.

My city, Lewisburg, is a good example. Founded in 1872, we are one of the oldest towns in West Virginia and the County Seat of Greenbrier County. Our lifeblood is tourism, and we have been careful to preserve our historic downtown, which is thriving. Our vibrant downtown stands in marked contrast with many other downtowns throughout West Virginia and across the country which have not recognized the value of the asset that an historical downtown represents.

It is something special, something in which we take pride, something that forms a strong foundation for our local economy and

something we can pass on to those who follow. As an elected official, I believe it is my charge to maintain assets entrusted to me and to pass them along in as good or better condition to my successors.

I feel the same way about the wild areas of the Monongahela National Forest that would be protected under this legislation. The wilderness areas described in this bill are special places to my city, to West Virginia and to the rest of the nation. They are natural assets that should be valued and protected as they are, not only for the value they offer us today but for the even greater value they will have for future generations.

Roadless areas are scarce in the eastern United States, and if we do not take steps now to recognize their value and protect them I feel they will disappear year after year in small increments until they no longer have real value as wild areas, areas where man truly is a visitor amidst the natural world and not the dominant feature.

The scarcity of roadless wild areas that would be protected in this bill create specific value to communities like Lewisburg which serve as access points to them. Several months ago I had the pleasure of exploring one of the wild areas covered in this bill, the area known as Big Draft, with the Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, Congressman Rahall, and it was a wonderful day.

Big Draft is located just 14 miles from Lewisburg. The proposed Spice Run Wilderness Area is about 30 miles away. Lewisburg is a natural staging area for visitors and residents alike who seek out designated wilderness areas. Just as having a well-preserved historic downtown helps our local economy, so, too, does having designated wilderness areas at our doorstep.

The added economic stimulus to our tourism-based economy is one reason why both Lewisburg City Council and the Greenbrier County Convention and Visitors Bureau support additional wilderness areas in the Monongahela National Forest, especially those proposed for Greenbrier County, which currently has none despite having nearly 108,000 acres of national forest within the county.

Lewisburg also supports the protection of Big Draft and Spice Run in particular because they are a part of the headwaters of the Greenbrier River, the source of Lewisburg's water system, the largest water utility in Greenbrier County, providing top quality water to over 10,000 people in our valley.

Lewisburg is not alone in local government support for additional wilderness areas. The following cities and towns have passed resolutions in support of designating additional wilderness areas in the Monongahela National Forest: Montgomery, Morgantown, Nitro, Nutter Fort, Shepherdstown, Weston, Renick, Whitehall, Grafton and Matoaka, as well as the Fayette County Commission.

I submit into the record Lewisburg's wilderness support resolution, which was attached to my remarks. The other resolutions are very similar. I think H.R. 5151, the Wild Monongahela Act, is a very good bill and a great start toward protecting many of the special places within the National Forest in West Virginia, and I hope you will support it.

In closing, I wish to express my appreciations to the Members of this Committee for their interest in the wild areas in West Virginia, and in particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of West Virginia Congressman Nick Rahall for bringing this legislation to this point. Thank you.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I will now turn to Reverend Sparks for your testimony.

Sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Manchester follows:]

**Statement of The Honorable John Manchester,
Mayor, Lewisburg, West Virginia**

Good morning.

My name is John Manchester, and I am mayor of Lewisburg, West Virginia, a small city of 3700 people, a few miles from the southern end of the Monongahela National Forest in the southeastern part of the state. I am speaking in favor of House Bill 5151, The Wild Monongahela Act. I appreciate the opportunity to be with you today.

As I am sure you have heard regularly from Congressman Rahall and the other members of the West Virginia Congressional delegation, West Virginia is a unique place with unique people. My city, Lewisburg, is a good example. Founded in 1782, we are one of the oldest towns in West Virginia and the county seat of Greenbrier County. Our lifeblood is tourism, and we have been careful to preserve our historic downtown which is thriving. Our vibrant downtown stands in marked contrast with many other downtowns throughout West Virginia and across the country which have not recognized the value of the asset that an historical downtown represents. It is something special, something in which we take pride, something that forms a strong foundation for our local economy, and something we can pass on to those who follow. As an elected official, I believe it is my charge to maintain assets entrusted to me and to pass them along in as good or better condition to my successors.

I feel the same way about the wild areas of the Monongahela National Forest that would be protected under this legislation. The wilderness areas described in this bill are special places to my city, to West Virginia and to the rest of the nation. They are natural assets that should be valued and protected as they are—not only for the value they offer us today but for the even greater value they will have for future generations. Roadless areas are scarce in the eastern United States, and if we do not take steps now to recognize their value and protect them, I fear they will disappear, year after year in small increments until they no longer have real value as wild areas—areas where man truly is a visitor amidst the natural world and not the dominant feature.

The scarcity of roadless, wild areas that would be protected in this bill creates specific value to communities like Lewisburg which serve as access points to them. Several months ago I had the pleasure of exploring one of the wild areas covered in this bill—the area known as Big Draft—with the Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, Congressman Rahall. Big Draft is fourteen miles from Lewisburg. The proposed Spice Run Wilderness Area is about 30 miles away.

Lewisburg is a natural staging area for visitors and residents alike who seek out designated wilderness areas. Just as having a well preserved, historic downtown helps our local economy, so too does having designated wilderness areas at our doorstep. The added economic stimulus to our tourism based economy is one reason why both Lewisburg City Council and the Greenbrier County Convention and Visitors Bureau support additional wilderness areas in the Monongahela National Forest, especially those proposed for Greenbrier County, which currently has none, despite having nearly 108,000 acres of the national forest within the county.

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I think House Bill 5151, The Wild Monongahela Act, is a very good bill and a great start toward protecting many of the special places within the national forest in West Virginia, and I hope you will support it.
Thank you.

RESOLUTION

11-22-03

A RESOLUTION BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LEWISBURG, WEST VIRGINIA TO SECURE PERMANENT PROTECTION FOR THE WILDEST PARTS OF WEST VIRGINIA AS WILDERNESS FOREST AREAS.

WHEREAS, wilderness forest areas protect the value of backcountry recreation, clean water and air, scenic beauty and wildlife habitat; and

WHEREAS, wilderness forest areas encompass the development of rural communities as people are attracted to, or stay in, places that are clean, beautiful and where they have ample opportunities to connect with nature; and

WHEREAS, wilderness forest areas encourage economic development in West Virginia because of tourists that are drawn to these wild areas to hike and camp; and

WHEREAS, people and businesses locate where the quality of life, based in part on a clean natural environment and high quality recreational opportunities is high; and

WHEREAS, public lands represent natural assets that provide communities with a comparative advantage over other rural areas in diversifying their economies; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LEWISBURG:

That the Mayor and Council of the City of Lewisburg support the protection of additional wilderness forest areas in the Monongahela National Forest.

On motion duly made my Councilperson McClure and seconded by Councilperson Caevar, the City of Lewisburg, West Virginia does hereby approve and authorize the adoption of said Resolution to become effective immediately.

Adopted this 18th day of November, 2003

John Manchester
John Manchester, Mayor

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

COUNTY OF GREENBRIER

MUNICIPALITY OF LEWISBURG: to wit,

I, Pat Johnson, CITY RECORDER of said municipality do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true, correct and complete copy of a Resolution adopted by the Council of the City of Lewisburg at a regular meeting held on November 18, 2003, in accordance with law, and that such Resolution has not been repealed, revoked, rescinded or amended, but is in full force and effect on the date hereof.

Witness my hand and the seal of the City of Lewisburg, West Virginia, this 18th day of November, 2003

Pat Johnson, CMC
Pat Johnson, CMC, Recorder

**STATEMENT OF REVEREND DENNIS SPARKS, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR, WEST VIRGINIA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**

Rev. SPARKS. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee and Chairman Rahall. I am the Reverend Dennis Sparks, Executive Director of the West Virginia Council of Churches. It is a privilege for me today to testify in support of the Wild Monongahela Act, H.R. 5151, and offer in part a theological justification for the bill.

The West Virginia Council of Churches is one of the oldest organizations in the state. Our mission is to make more visible the unity of the church, provide a Christian witness on public issues and engage in cooperative mission and service for all West Virginians. The Council of Churches currently includes 14 denominations in the state whose membership rolls approach 600,000.

As an expression of our concern for the environment, the Council has endorsed the wilderness recommendations of the West Virginia Coalition. It is our belief that each of the 15 special wild areas identified by the coalition ultimately deserves to be permanently protected as wilderness by Congress.

In 2006, we expressed this support by cosponsoring the book *God's Gift of the Wild and Wonderful Land: A Christian Declaration on Spiritual Values of West Virginia's Monongahela National Forest*, the booklet that Congressman Rahall lifted up earlier. This declaration, which I would like to provide to the Subcommittee for the hearing record, described the many spiritual values that wilderness can provide and called for greater wild land protection for the forest.

Some here today may wonder why our state's faith community cares about wilderness protection for the Monongahela National Forest. In fact, many of my fellow West Virginians have long found inspiration in this beautiful forest. As Bob Marshall noted in a 2007 column in the *Charleston Gazette*, a pastor tells of asking his congregation when have you felt closest to God, and reports they rarely answer during my sermons.

Like them, many of us in West Virginia find some of our most profound spiritual experiences in the greatest cathedral of them all, in solitude beside still waters or in the deep forest lit by sunlight dappled through the forest canopy. Bob's article gives an eloquent testimony on behalf of wilderness.

I request, also, that it be part of the hearing record. As I will explain, the Council of Churches feels that areas in H.R. 5151 should remain untouched and stand as permanently protected natural cathedrals. We view preserving such areas as a form of tithing, setting apart some of the natural bounty that God has given us as a wild sanctuary.

We base this position on our shared Christian belief that: 1] our wild forests are part of God's creation; and 2] wilderness, if protected, provides a number of important spiritual and natural beliefs; and 3] we have a spiritual responsibility for protecting our forests and wilderness resources on Earth.

First, God's creation. As Psalm 24:1 proclaims, the Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof the world and all that dwell in it. In Genesis, God proclaimed the goodness of the trees and other plant life which God had created and in Romans says for since the

creation of the world is eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through things he has made that they are without excuse.

In our present world, trees and forests are not only crucial components of a healthy environment, they are living symbols of the many natural spiritual gifts that God has given us.

Spiritual values in wilderness. Wilderness provides many spiritual gifts. God's gift of the wild and wonderful land explored these wild land faith benefits from a Christian perspective. Among its key findings the declaration noted that wilderness teaches humility, that mountains are big and we are small.

Surrounded by wilderness, we experience God's immense creation as majestic, yet intricate, into its accountable details. Today, protected wild forests provide us that precious and ever more elusive opportunity to be still and know that I am God.

Finally, stewardship. Before the flood, Noah protected at least two of every animal species. After the flood, God said to Noah, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you, and with every living creature that is with you of the birds, of the cattle and of every wild animal of the Earth with you.

As we read the Bible, we see that our faith calls us to be good stewards of God's magnificent creation. Finally, we feel it is our opportunity and duty as people of faith to safeguard wilderness in the West Virginia mountains, the oldest mountains in all the world, and we support H.R. 5151 and hope to see it strengthened with additional protection for other critical areas that are part of the Wilderness Coalition's proposal. Thank you for this opportunity.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Reverend. Turning now to Mr. Price, AFL-CIO.

Sir.

[The prepared statement of Reverend Sparks follows:]

**Statement of The Reverend Dennis Sparks, Executive Director,
West Virginia Council of Churches**

Chairman Grijalva and Members of the Subcommittee, I am the Reverend Dennis Sparks, Executive Director of the West Virginia Council of Churches. I am pleased to testify before you today in support of H.R. 5151, the "Wild Monongahela: A National Legacy for West Virginia's Special Places." My task today is to offer a faith perspective and foundation for the establishment of the Wilderness classification.

The West Virginia Council of Churches' mission "is to make more visible the unity of Christ's church, provide a Christian witness on public issues, and engage in cooperative mission and service for all West Virginians." As one of the oldest institutions in the State of West Virginia, we trace our origins to 1880 and our roots to the 1820s. In the time between 1880 and the present, the work of a few volunteers has blossomed into a cooperative Christian mission and service for all West Virginians.

The membership of the Council of Churches currently includes 14 church denominations in the state, whose membership rolls approach 600,000. Respecting the traditions of each denomination—while uniting to speak with one voice and to act with united hands—we carry the justice message of faith into the public arena. Over the years, the West Virginia Council of Churches has been active in areas of social justice, children's health, economic, environmental and statewide legislative issues, interfaith dialogue and cooperation, as well as service programs in disaster recovery. We are currently through our "Beyond the Yellow Ribbon" program, organizing support for our military families.

As an expression of our interest in and concern for the health of the environment in West Virginia, the Council acted in 2006 to endorse the Wilderness recommendations of the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition (WVWC). It is our belief that each of the 15 special wild areas identified by the WVWC ultimately deserves to be per-

manently protected by Congress for the benefit of current and future generations as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Our support of these Wilderness recommendations has taken many forms in recent years. We publicly co-sponsored the booklet and later the DVD, "God's Gift of a Wild and Wonderful Land, A Christian Declaration on the Spiritual Values of West Virginia's Monongahela National Forest," which was released to the public in 2006. This document carefully outlined the many spiritual values and lessons that wilderness can provide. As Jesus often drew apart to wild places to pray, we recognize the continuing power and importance to the human spirit of our remaining wild lands. In recognition of these spiritual values, "God's Gift of a Wild and Wonderful Land" also contained a clear call by many of West Virginia's Christian faith leaders for greater care for creation and for the protection of additional wilderness in our beautiful state. For the Council of Churches this has been and still is an issue of justice that calls for a balance of the natural beauty of creation with the responsibility of human dominion over the earth.

The Council of Churches has also expressed support for wilderness in correspondence to the Monongahela National Forest during its forest planning process and in recent statements in the West Virginia press. Today, as an additional response to our stewardship call to protect God's creation, I would like to express the support of the West Virginia Council of Churches for the "Wild Monongahela" legislation, H.R. 5151.

Perhaps some here today are wondering why the West Virginia faith community would care about wilderness protection for the Monongahela National Forest. In fact, many of my West Virginia colleagues and fellow Christians have long found spiritual inspiration in our beautiful national forest. As co-founder of Christians for the Mountains, Bob Marshall, noted in a February, 2007 column in the Charleston Gazette:

"An Arizona pastor tells of asking his congregation, 'When have you felt closest to God?' and reports that they rarely answer, 'During your sermons.' Like them, many of us here in West Virginia find some of our most profound spiritual experiences in the greatest cathedral of them all—in solitude beside the still waters or in a deep forest lit by sunlight dappled through the forest canopy. Or, here in the Monongahela National Forest, beside the not-so-still waters of a gloriously wild, rushing mountain stream."

Bob Marshall's article provides an eloquent testimony on behalf of additional wilderness protection for West Virginia's wonderful wild lands. I have included it at the end of my written statement and request that it be made part of the official record of this hearing.

The Council of Churches asks that the areas identified in H.R. 5151 should be allowed to remain untouched by development and stand as permanently protected natural cathedrals. Preserving these special areas is a form of tithing, setting apart some of the natural bounty that the Creator has given us as a wild sanctuary and protecting it in its undefiled natural condition. We are convinced that only permanent, strong protection afforded by Wilderness designation can ensure that the solitude and closeness to God's creation in nature will still be available in West Virginia for all citizens of this great American land to enjoy. If these areas are not moved into permanent protective designations, the possibility for future disruption from logging operations, off-road vehicles and other uses will always be present.

Our support for this legislation, and our underlying support for Wilderness protection, is based on our shared beliefs that 1) our forests and wild lands are part of God's creation, 2) Wilderness, if protected, provides a number of important spiritual and natural benefits, and 3) we have a stewardship responsibility for protecting our forests and wilderness resources on Earth.

God's Creation

As Psalm 24:1 proclaims, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and all that dwell in it." In the Biblical story of creation, trees are the emblem of the living earth and Adam and Eve first encountered creation through two trees—the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. In Genesis (1:12), God proclaimed the goodness of trees and other plant life which he had created. You are invited to capture the moment: "The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with seed in it. And God saw that it was good." As Romans (1:20) explains, "Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made." In our present world, as this passage from Romans reminds us that, trees are not only crucial components of a healthy environment, they are living symbols of the many good gifts that God

has given us—including clean streams, fresh air, bountiful fish and wildlife habitats, and sources of spiritual inspiration.

Spiritual Values of Wilderness

Upon reflection, we see that there are many spiritual values and lessons that can be gained in the Wilderness. “God’s Gift of a Wild and Wonderful Land” explored the faith values provided by protected wilderness areas and explained why such areas are important from a Christian perspective. Among the many key aspects of wilderness, the declaration noted that:

- In wilderness we learn about God. When we leave the crowds of town and city and enter the quiet and peace of wild places, the deep questions of human life rise to the surface.
- Wilderness is God’s gift of creation undefiled. Without wilderness, we lose a reminder of what creation is like in its pristine condition. The clean air, the cold water, the quiet of trees, the moist earth and everything in between help us to clarify our thinking so that we can open to God and the nature of creation.
- Wilderness teaches humility. The mountains are big and we are small. Surrounded by wildness, we experience God’s immense creation as majestic yet intricate in its uncountable details.

In centuries past, people of the Judeo-Christian heritage as well people of other ancient faiths had a strong understanding of the spiritual values to be found in the wilderness. In Hebrew tradition Moses lead the Israelites into the wilderness; from the Christian experience, Jesus went to the wilderness to prepare for his ministry. The saints went to the wilderness to find a deeper experience of God. For many of us today, protected Wilderness areas and other wild forests provide us that precious—and ever more elusive—opportunity to, “Be still, and know that I am God.”

Stewardship

Before the Flood, Noah and his family protected at least two of every animal species. After the Flood, God said to Noah, “Behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you, and with every living creature that is with you, of the birds, of the cattle, and of every wild animal of the earth with you” (Genesis 9:9). As we read these and other biblical passages, we see that our religious heritage calls us to be good stewards of the Creator’s magnificent creation.

With respect to the protection of our forests and our state’s environment, we see that the choices originally presented by two trees to Adam and Eve are still choices before us today. It is through our trees of forest that we will choose life and may perhaps know the difference between good and evil. We can choose to honor the Creator and respect the creation and the integrity of the good earth, or we can follow the path of exploitation and loss. As the Reverend Billy Graham has said, “It is not right for us to destroy the world that God has given us...We Christians have a responsibility to take the lead in the caring for the earth.”

Conclusion

The words of the Psalmist (1:3) compared the pursuit of happiness as the “trees planted by streams of living water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do they prosper.” In short, we believe that it is both our ecological and economic opportunity and moral duty as people of faith to safeguard our Wilderness resources and forest wild lands. This safeguard relates to a now famous line found in President John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address: “God’s work must truly be our own.” As one author stated in response to the President, “More importantly, in an era of heightened human impact upon the entire planet, our own work must truly be God’s” (Earth Community Earth Ethics, Larry L. Rasmussen, 1996, page 293).

As an area of federal land belonging to all Americans, the Monongahela National Forest can uniquely provide opportunities for reflection and inspiration that are becoming ever scarcer in our rapidly modernizing and developing world. We believe that carefully protecting this wonderful national forest and its Wilderness-quality lands not only has a sound biblical foundation, but is also the best and most practical course of action for safeguarding the beauty, abundance, and ecological health of the world which we will pass along to our children’s children.

We thank the Chairman and other members of the West Virginia delegation for their good efforts and share in the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition’s hope to see the bill strengthened before it is passed with additional protection for other critical areas that are part of the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition’s proposal. Thank you for considering our testimony today.

However much time you and I spend in our churches, my guess is that like me, you find that a particularly fitting place to commune with your God is in His own wilderness.

An Arizona pastor tells of asking his congregation, "When have you felt closest to God?" and reports that they rarely answer, "During your sermons." Like them, many of us here in West Virginia find some of our most profound spiritual experiences in the greatest cathedral of them all—in solitude beside the still waters or in a deep forest lit by sunlight dappled through the forest canopy. Or, here in the Monongahela National Forest, beside the not-so-still waters of a gloriously wild, rushing mountain stream such as Seneca Creek.

As a Christian who reads the Bible regularly, I know that the greatest prophets sought the wildest places in nature for their most intense spiritual renewal. Moses convened with God on Sinai for "forty days and forty nights" (Exodus 24:18). And Mark tells us that Jesus sojourned in the wilderness for "forty days" (Mark 1:13). In short, wilderness is part of our Biblical heritage.

The Lord, I believe, did not place us in this earthly garden to see us despoil every part of it, or to turn every acre to our immediate needs for food, fiber and money. There is a deep inborn reason that our hearts respond with a joyous leap to great vistas of unspoiled nature. His Creation as He created it.

This is why I am working through my organization, Christians for the Mountains, and religious leaders in our state, including the West Virginia Council of Churches, to encourage our Members of Congress to protect additional areas of wilderness. Thanks to the visionary and bipartisan Wilderness Act that Congress passed in 1964, we have the means through our democratic process to see that a reasonable sample of the wilderness solitudes of the Monongahela National Forest will be preserved for all time to serve many values, not least being our spiritual needs.

For us, this is an act of humility. Surely it would be immoral for our generation to deny future generations of West Virginians what the Wilderness Act terms "the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness." Our obligation to them, and to our Creator, runs deeper. Preserving wilderness areas such as Seneca Creek, Spice Run and the Dolly Sods Expansion, is a form of tithing, setting apart some of the natural bounty given to us as a wild sanctuary, protecting it in its undefiled natural condition for the benefit of generations unborn.

So, we ask our elected officials to take a political action in a nonpartisan way. We ask them to preserve more of the wilderness of the Mon. Far into the future our descendants in these mountains will lift their eyes unto the hills. They will need and treasure these quiet reserves of God's wild solitudes so much more in their crowded world than we can even imagine.

The great Republican Teddy Roosevelt spoke of our obligation to the future, railing against "the shortsighted men who in their greed and selfishness will, if permitted, rob our country of half its charm by their reckless extermination of all useful and beautiful wild things."

The "greatest good for the greatest number," Roosevelt reminds us, "applies to the number within the womb of time, compared to which those now alive form but an insignificant fraction. Our duty to the whole, including the unborn generations, bids us restrain" ourselves "from wasting the heritage of these unborn generations." I personally want to know that my four grandchildren, and their children, will be afforded the same opportunity to experience the awe inspiring wild places we seek to protect.

Today, you and I bear this moral responsibility to those within the womb of time. Yes, we could develop the remaining unprotected wild places in our national forest if we chose to; that decision is in our hands. But in a very real way, all those yet unborn are watching us, praying (as writer Terry Tempest Williams so eloquently puts it) "for us to see beyond our own time. They are kneeling with clasped hands hoping that we might act with restraint."

We humans live only by grace, and Williams reminds us that it is within our legislative powers—held by our elected representatives—to take care that a good, big, generous sample of God's wilderness lives on as well. Wilderness areas such as Cranberry Glades and Dolly Sods that Congress has already protected in this way, offer places to play in, to be sure, for hunters, fishermen, campers and hikers, young families, and sturdy mountaineers who remain young at heart.

And, for many of us, wilderness offers the very best places in which to pray.

[Bob Marshall, of Kenna, is a native West Virginian, avid fly fisherman, hunter and a practicing veterinarian. He co-founded Christians for the Mountains, and helps lead the Religious Campaign for Wilderness. For information about citizen wilderness proposals, visit www.wvwild.org.]

STATEMENT OF MIKE PRICE, WEST VIRGINIA AFL-CIO

Mr. PRICE. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee. I would like to thank you, Mr. Rahall, for introducing this bill. I am Mike Price of the West Virginia AFL-CIO. I am a member of the United Steel Workers Local 889. I have a resolution from the AFL-CIO in support of this that I would like to put in the record and also one from my local union.

On October 2, 2007, at the West Virginia AFL-CIO's Constitutional Convention in Wheeling, West Virginia, over 180 delegates representing different unions unanimously voted to adopt a resolution to secure permanent protection for the wilderness forest areas, as proposed by the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition. This included Seneca Creek and the East Fork of the Greenbrier.

We did so believing that wilderness designation will protect one of our state's most valued assets, scenic beauty. These special wild places encompass the development of rural communities as people are attracted to or stay in places that are clean, beautiful and where they have ample opportunity to connect with nature.

These wilderness areas provide outdoor recreation, such as hunting, fishing, which improves the quality of life of West Virginians. Wildlife management to restore native wildlife populations can continue to occur in wilderness so long as it maintains the wilderness character of the area. Wilderness designation is the best way to protective sensitive wildlife species from development pressures.

Wilderness provides priceless clean water, clean air and a healthy environment for neighboring communities. Watershed protection results in protection of clean drinking water, as well as decreased potential for flooding downstream. West Virginia's more than 15 million acres are nearly 80 percent forested.

Ninety-eight percent of this forest land is classified as timberland or commercial forest land with 98 percent of this owned by private individuals or corporations. Wilderness designation would have no impact on these private lands that produce over 95 percent of West Virginia's commercial harvested timber.

The wilderness proposal put forth would affect only five-tenths of a percent of the state's commercial timberland, thus preserving West Virginia's timber-based economy while providing the enhancement of a broad array of other forest areas. After all, the Monongahela National Forest slogan is land of many uses.

Protecting wilderness helps diversify and stabilize economies by attracting and retaining businesses, residents and a local workforce in addition to generating travel and tourism, one of the fastest growing sections of West Virginia's economy.

The AFL-CIO recognizes that wilderness designation will attract business, creating many job opportunities. Unions have always supported legislation which creates jobs and protect a healthy environment. I am a United Steel Worker affiliated with the AFL-CIO and also an outings lead with the Sierra Club.

United Steel Workers has a blue/green alliance with the Sierra Club which works together on environmental issues. Unions recognize the importance of protecting our special places, the environment and creating green-based job opportunities. As an outings lead for the Sierra Club, security and protection for these special places in Monongahela creates endless opportunities for leading trips into wild places in our beautiful state.

The designation of wilderness status to the areas proposed in Monongahela in no way hurts the economy in West Virginia. It will enhance the economy and quality of life and ensure that future generations have unexplored wilderness to enjoy. To speak specifically about one particular area of importance included in the Wild Monongahela Act, I will quote Elizabeth Little of Hillsboro, West Virginian who has likely spent more time in the area than anyone else alive.

“In the summer of 1995, I spent the day with a Forest Service team and a group of concerned citizens touring the Little Fork area, part of what is now the Cranberry Expansion. This was occasioned by the Forest Service announcement that they were preparing a management plan for the area.”

“On that field trip and in an ensuing letter, I pointed out to the Forest Service that the Cranberry wilderness wasn’t big enough. Previously, a Forest Service ranger from the Gauley District and I had walked the Cranberry and frequented several hunters and camps along the way. This means the wilderness provides a minimum range for large wildlife that is intolerant to disturbance.”

“Since the Cranberry is already the largest wilderness in the Monon and is bounded by roads on all sides, the Cranberry Expansion is the only possibility for variety and a larger undisturbed territory. The elevation in the central ridge in the Cranberry Expansion is over 4,000 feet and was originally dominated ridge forest, which the Forest Service has been actively working to regenerate.”

“The Cranberry Expansion is not a showy attraction for tourists. There are no specular views or thunderous waterfalls. It is a place of deep coves, forest folded with mountain streams. It is a place of abiding peace and quiet, of psychic renewal for humans, but mostly a place of trees that will only become magnificent with time.”

So we would recommend that you all pass this. We thank the Committee and the Chair, and especially you, Representative Rahall, for introducing this bill. Thank you.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Mr. Price. Now, Mr. Bittner, Mountaineer Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Your testimony, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Price follows:]

Statement of Michael Price, President, USW Local 8-89, AFL-CIO

On October 2, 2007 at the West Virginia AFL-CIO’s Constitutional Convention in Wheeling, WV over one hundred eighty delegates representing many different unions unanimously voted to adopt a resolution to “Secure Permanent Protection For West Virginia’s Wilderness Forest Areas” as proposed by the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition. This included Seneca Creek, all of Roaring Plains and the East Fork of the Greenbrier in addition to area in H.R. 5151.

The Convention delegates took this action to support Wilderness legislation believing that protecting one of our states most valued assets, its scenic beauty, will help enable the development of rural communities.

People are attracted to, and businesses want to locate or stay in, places that offer a high quality of life, are clean, beautiful and where there are ample opportunity to connect with nature.

These Wilderness areas provide outdoor recreation such as hunting, fishing and hiking which improves the quality of life for West Virginians.

Wildlife management to restore native wildlife populations can continue to occur in wilderness areas so long as it maintains the wilderness character of the area. Wilderness designation is the best way to protect sensitive wildlife species from development pressures.

Wilderness protects watersheds, provides clean air, and provides a healthy environment for neighboring communities. Watershed protection results in protection of clean drinking water sources and the lack of disturbance decreases potential for flooding downstream.

West Virginia's more than fifteen million acres are nearly 80% forested. 98% of this forest land is classified as timberland or "commercial forest land." 98% of these commercial forest lands are owned by private individuals or corporations. Wilderness designation would have no impact on these private lands that produce over 95% of West Virginia's commercially harvested timber. The wilderness proposal put forth would affect only 0.5% of the state's commercial timberland, thus preserving West Virginia's timber-based economy while providing for the enhancement of a broad array of other forest uses. After all the Monongahela National Forest's slogan is "Land of Many Uses."

Protecting wilderness helps diversify and stabilize economies by attracting and retaining business, residents and a local workforce in addition to generating travel and tourism, one of the fastest growing sections of West Virginia's economy. The AFL-CIO recognizes that wilderness designation will attract businesses creating many job opportunities now and into the future. Union's have always supported legislation which creates jobs and protects the health and a healthy environment.

I am a United Steel Worker member affiliated with the AFL-CIO and I am also an Outings Leader with the Sierra Club. The USW has a "Blue/ Green Alliance" with the Sierra Club which works together on environmental issues.

Union's recognize the importance of protecting our special places, the environment, and creating "green based job opportunities." As a Sierra Club Outings Leader, having protected special places in the Monongahela creates endless opportunities for me to share our state's beautiful wild places with others.

The designation of wilderness to the areas proposed in the Wild Monongahela Act will enhance the economy of West Virginia and the quality of life for West Virginians. It will ensure that future generations have unspoiled wilderness to enjoy as we do today.

To speak specifically about one particular area of importance included in the Wild Monongahela Act, I'll quote Elizabeth Little of Hillsboro, WV who has likely spent more time in this area than any one else alive:

"In the summer of 1995, I spent the day with a Forest Service team and a group of concerned citizens touring the Little Fork Area, part of what is now the Cranberry Expansion. This was occasioned by the Forest Service announcement that they were preparing a management plan for the area.

On that field trip and in an ensuing letter, I pointed out to the Forest Service that the adjacent Cranberry Wilderness wasn't big enough.

Previously, a Forest Service Ranger from the Gauley District and I had walked across the Cranberry at a long oblique angle in only six hours, even though we stopped frequently to converse with several hunters in camps along the way. This means the existing Wilderness provides a minimal range for large wildlife that is intolerant of disturbance. Since the Cranberry is already the largest Wilderness in the Mon and is bounded by roads on all other sides, the Cranberry Expansion is the only possibility for providing a larger undisturbed territory.

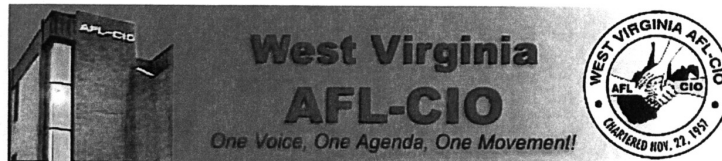
Apparently they heard me. When I phoned the next year to find out how their planning was going, the team leader informed me that they had tabled the planning because of the wilderness issues raised; and then, in the recent Forest Plan, the Cranberry Expansion was formally recommended by the Forest Service for Wilderness designation.

There may have been additional things to influence their recommendation. The elevation of the central ridge in the Cranberry Expansion is over 4000 feet and was originally dominated by red spruce forest, which the Forest Service has been actively working to regenerate. During the 1995 field trip we learned that the discovery of threatened and endangered species would change the location of a proposed road and cause logging in the area to be cancelled. Studies on the location of northern flying squirrels would continue, and the presence of goshawk nests indicated that they were returning. With this uncertainty about where a road could be

built, and the fact that the Little Fork area is at "the end of the road" because it is next to the Cranberry Wilderness, the investment of miles of new road might not make financial or ecological sense.

The Cranberry Expansion is not a showy attraction for tourist consumption. There are no spectacular views or thunderous waterfalls. It is a place of deep cove forest folded with mountain streams. It is so shady that the automatic flash goes off when you try to take a picture. It is so moist that even on a sunny summer day your rear gets wet if you sit on the ground.

It is a place of abiding peace and quiet, of psychic renewal for humans, but mostly, a place of trees that will only become more magnificent with time.



*Resolution # 19
Submitted by: USW Local 8-89
Referred to the Committee on Resolutions*

SECURE PERMANENT PROTECTION FOR WV WILDERNESS FOREST AREAS

WHEREAS, wilderness forest areas protect the value of backcountry recreation, clean water and air, scenic beauty and wildlife habitat; and

WHEREAS, wilderness forest areas encompass the development of rural communities as people are attracted to, or stay in, places that are clean, beautiful and where they have ample opportunities to connect with nature; and

WHEREAS, wilderness forest areas and the outdoor recreation, hunting and fishing they provide improve the quality of life for all West Virginians; and

WHEREAS, wilderness forest areas often contain sources of our municipal water supply and keeping them forested can protect the water quality and control flooding; and

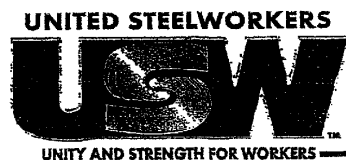
WHEREAS, protected wilderness helps diversify and stabilize economies by attracting and retaining business, residents, and a local workforce, in addition to generating travel and tourism, one of the fastest growing sectors of West Virginia's economy.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the president and council support the protection of additional wilderness forest areas in the Monongahela National Forest as proposed by the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition.

- The Committee reports **FAVORABLY** and moves the resolution be adopted.*
 *The Committee reports **UNFAVORABLY** and moves the resolution be rejected.*
 *The Committee **AMENDS** (or **REFERS**) the resolution as follows:*

The above resolution was unanimously adopted on October 2, 2007 during the West Virginia AFL-CIO Constitutional Convention.

**Kenneth M. Perdue, President
West Virginia AFL-CIO
501 Leon Sullivan Way
Charleston, WV 25301
304-344-3557**




**SECURE PERMANENT PROTECTION FOR WV WILDERNESS
FOREST AREAS**

WHEREAS, wilderness forest areas protect the value of backcountry recreation, clean water and air, scenic beauty and wildlife habitat; and
 WHEREAS, wilderness forest areas encompass the development of rural communities as people are attracted to, or stay in, places that are clean, beautiful and where they have ample opportunities to connect with nature; and
 WHEREAS, wilderness forest areas and the outdoor recreation, hunting and fishing they provide improve the quality of life for all West Virginians; and
 WHEREAS, wilderness forest areas often contain sources of our municipal water supply and keeping them forested can protect the water quality and control flooding; and
 WHEREAS, protected wilderness helps diversify and stabilize economies by attracting and retaining business, residents, and a local workforce, in addition to generating travel and tourism, one of the fastest growing sectors of West Virginia's economy.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the president and USW Local 8-89 support the protection of additional wilderness forest areas in the Monongahela National Forest as proposed by the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition.

The above resolution was unanimously adopted on February 4, 2008.


 Michael Price, President
 USW Local 8-89
 P.O. Box 374
 Boomer, WV 25031

**STATEMENT OF BOB BITTNER, JR., MOUNTAINEER CHAPTER
OF TROUT UNLIMITED**

Mr. BITTNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Robert Bittner, I am a member of the Board of Directors of Mountaineer Chapter Trout Unlimited. The mission of Trout Unlimited, both nationally and locally, is to conserve, protect and restore our cold water fisheries and their watersheds.

The native and wild trout in these ecosystems represent not only an unsurpassed recreational opportunity but also connect us to the natural heritage of our country. For those of us lucky enough to live in West Virginia, the embodiment of our heritage is the Eastern Brook Trout. These beautiful, speckled trout require intact, undisturbed watersheds to flourish.

Because of this, Mountaineer Chapter Trout Unlimited wholly supports the Wild Monongahela: A National Legacy for West Virginia's Special Places legislation. The Eastern Brook Trout is the only native trout for the eastern United States.

This stunning fish, with its flanks splashed in red and blue spots, creamy white underbelly washed with orange, pectoral fins striped white, black and orange and its veined dark olive back,

holds a special place in the hearts of West Virginia's anglers and residents.

Stranded in our mountain streams and rivers after the retreat of the last glaciation, the trout of the springs, *Salvelinus Fontinalis*, symbolizes the wildness and beauty that was our nation before European settlement. Just like our special places, the hollows, ridges and cricks of West Virginia, the Brook Trout faces threats from development, poor logging and agricultural practices and energy production.

Federal wilderness designation permanently protects portions of the national trust. It allows these forests and watersheds to heal and mature. An intact and undisturbed forest is one of the best management tools for protecting Brook Trout. Forest floors, free of the compaction of roads and logging trails, absorb, cool and slowly release rain water to streams.

They help minimize the flooding and subsequent soil erosion of extreme precipitation events. This keeps the stream bed gravels clean and free of siltation, which allows the Brook Trout to successfully reproduce. The mature forest canopy provides vital thermal protection, shading our streams and rivers from an increasingly warming climate.

Warming waters above 68 degrees Fahrenheit do not contain enough oxygen for the trout and the insects, crustaceans and forage fishes upon which they feed. Federal wilderness designation will also give the included streams a Tier 3 protection level under the antidegradation rule of the Federal Clean Water Act.

This is the highest level of water quality protection and provides citizens and government officials with an important tool to safeguard the sources of much of our drinking water. Maintaining high water quality in the headwaters of many of our larger watersheds may provide flexibility in the regulation of downstream non-Federal lands development and agricultural production.

This may become invaluable for residents within the Chesapeake Bay regulatory watershed. Wilderness is a management designation that allows fisheries biologists many options to monitor and improve the health of Brook Trout populations. The reestablishment of native species is a primary goal in wilderness. Creel and size limits and their effect on population dynamics can still be managed.

The opportunity to fully study populations and their response to environmental changes is unsurpassed in a wilderness area. Many other states, most notably Montana and Idaho, constantly monitor and manage their native fish populations within wilderness areas and use this data as a baseline for work outside of wilderness areas.

Wilderness also allows for the protection of native fish from invasive, nonnative species. The protection of native Brook Trout from introduced nonnative trout species is becoming an important part of fisheries management. H.R. 5151, the Wild Monongahela: A National Legacy for West Virginia's Special Places, will be a large and first step toward conserving and protecting the Eastern Brook Trout and their watersheds in the 21st Century.

Mountaineer Chapter Trout Unlimited supports and encourages its passage by Congress and its approval by the President. The

membership of Mountaineer Chapter Trout Unlimited would also urge the Congress to add two of the finest limestone karst geology Brook Trout watersheds in West Virginia to the bill.

Seneca Creek and its watershed, listed by Trout Unlimited National as one of America's top 100 hundred streams, as well as the East Fork of the Greenbrier River, both support wild native Brook Trout. These two areas are overdue for the protection Congress can provide with wilderness designation.

I would like to take this opportunity to also express my personal support for the Wild Mon legislation. I am a resident and business owner from Pendleton County, West Virginia. I hold a Bachelor of Science degree in environmental sciences with a major in forest and land use management from Stockton State College in New Jersey.

My business is related to the timber industry. Robert Bittner Cabinetmaker is a custom design, build proprietorship specializing in furniture and architectural millwork. Supplies of quality wood are the lifeblood of my craft. Given that more than 97 percent of the state's timber harvest comes from private land, I know that the Wild Mon legislation will not adversely affect my business.

However, keeping the image of West Virginia as wild and wonderful will benefit my business. My disappointment in the bill is that it does not yet include the crown jewel of West Virginia's native trout streams, Seneca Creek in Pendleton County. I hope that Seneca will become part of the Wild Mon Act before the President signs the bill.

I thank you for your time and your interest.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much. The final panelist, Mr. Gil Willis, Elk River Inn & Restaurant. Sir, your testimony.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bittner follows:]

**Statement of Robert Bittner, Member, Board of Directors,
Mountaineer Chapter Trout Unlimited**

The mission of Trout Unlimited, both nationally and locally is to conserve, protect and restore our cold water fisheries and their watersheds. The native and wild trout in these ecosystems represent not only an unsurpassed recreational opportunity but also connect us to the natural heritage of our country. For those of us lucky enough to live in West Virginia, the embodiment of our heritage is the Eastern Brook Trout. These beautiful speckled trout require intact, undisturbed watersheds to flourish. And because of this, Mountaineer Chapter Trout Unlimited wholly supports the Wild Monongahela: a National Legacy for West Virginia's Special Places legislation.

The Eastern Brook Trout is the only native trout for the eastern United States. This stunning fish with its flanks splashed in red and blue spots, creamy white underbelly washed with orange, pectoral fins striped white black and orange and its veined dark olive back holds a special place in the hearts of West Virginia's anglers and residents. Stranded in our mountain streams and rivers after the retreat of the last glaciation, the "trout of the springs" *Salvelinus fontinalis* symbolizes the wildness and beauty that was our nation before European settlement. Just like our special places the hollows, ridges and cricks of West Virginia, the Brook Trout faces threats from development, poor logging and agricultural practices and energy production.

Federal wilderness designation permanently protects portions of the national trust. It allows these forests and watersheds to heal and mature. An intact and undisturbed forest is one of the best management tools for protecting Brook Trout. Forest floors, free of the compaction of roads and logging trails absorb, cool and slowly release rainwater to streams. They help minimize the flooding and subsequent soil erosion of extreme precipitation events. This keeps the stream bed gravels clean and free of siltation, which allows the Brook Trout to successfully reproduce. The mature forest canopy provides vital thermal protection, shading our streams and rivers from an increasingly warming climate. Warming waters, above sixty-

eight degrees Fahrenheit, do not contain enough oxygen for the trout and the insects, crustaceans and forage fishes upon which they feed.

Federal wilderness designation will also give the included streams a Tier 3 protection level under the anti-degradation rule of the Federal Clean Water Act. This is the highest level of water quality protection and provides citizens and government officials with an important tool to safeguard the sources of much of our drinking water. Maintaining high water quality in the headwaters of many of our larger watersheds may provide flexibility in the regulation of downstream (non-federal lands) development and agricultural production. This may become invaluable for residents within the Chesapeake Bay regulatory watershed.

Wilderness is a management designation that allows fisheries biologists many options to monitor and improve the health of Brook Trout populations. The re-establishment of native species is a primary goal in wilderness. Creel and size limits and their effect on population dynamics can still be managed. The opportunity to fully study populations and their response to environmental changes is unsurpassed in a wilderness area. Many other states, most notably Montana and Idaho, constantly monitor and manage their native fish populations within wilderness areas and use this data as a baseline for work outside of wilderness areas. Wilderness also allows for the protection of native fish from invasive, non-native species. The protection of native Brook Trout from introduced non-native trout species is becoming an important part of fisheries management.

H.R. 5151—The Wild Monongahela: A Natural Legacy for West Virginia's Special Places will be a large and first step towards conserving and protecting the Eastern Brook Trout and their watersheds in the twenty-first century. Mountaineer Chapter Trout Unlimited supports and encourages its passage by Congress and its approval by the President. The membership of Mountaineer Chapter Trout Unlimited would also urge the Congress to add two of the finest limestone karst geology Brook Trout watersheds in West Virginia to the bill. Seneca Creek and its watershed, listed by Trout Unlimited National as one of Americas top one hundred streams, as well as the East Fork of the Greenbrier River both support wild native Brook Trout. These two areas are overdue for the protection Congress can provide with Wilderness designation.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my personal support for the Wild Monongahela (Wild Mon) legislation. I am a resident and business owner from Pendleton County, West Virginia. I hold a Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Sciences with a major in Forest and Land Use Management from Stockton State College in NJ. My business is related to the timber industry; Robert Bittner Cabinetmaker is a custom design/build proprietorship specializing in furniture and architectural millwork. Supplies of quality wood are the lifeblood of my craft. Given that more than ninety-seven percent of the state's timber harvest comes from private land, I know that the Wild Mon legislation will not adversely affect my business; however, keeping the image of West Virginia as wild and wonderful will benefit my business. My disappointment in the bill is that it does not yet include the crown jewel of West Virginia's native trout streams, Seneca Creek, in Pendleton County. I hope that Seneca will be in the Wild Mon act before the President signs the bill.

Thank you for your time and interest. As a citizen, I appreciate the opportunity to express my personal support and the endorsement of Mountaineer Chapter Trout Unlimited for this important legislation.

**STATEMENT OF GIL WILLIS, ELK RIVER INN & RESTAURANT,
SLATYFORK, WEST VIRGINIA**

Mr. WILLIS. Good morning, and thank you for having me. I would like to thank the Subcommittee Chairman and my Congressman, Nick Rahall, and Members of the Committee for allowing me to speak today in support of the Wild Monongahela Act. This is an historic piece of legislation that will help ensure the future of West Virginia's greatest national treasure, our national forest.

Let me begin my comments by commending Congressman Rahall and the entire West Virginia congressional delegation for their commitment to working and listening to the people of West Virginia. This bill truly reflects the thoughts and concerns of residents of the Mountain State who appreciate our natural forests and the wild areas that are included in these lands.

Our congressional team has developed a proposal that protects our forests and meets the needs of the forest's many users. I especially appreciated the open process Congressman Rahall and his staff has had and the entire delegation's willingness to meet with me and other concerned West Virginians and their desire to work with all of us to develop a proposal that truly represents West Virginians and the will to ensure the future of our state's forests for generations to come.

As a member of West Virginia's business community whose business is dependent on our state's wild and wonderful landscape, I am very supportive of efforts to ensure the wild future of our forests. My wife and I own and operate Elk River Inn Restaurant Touring Center which is open year round as a skiing, fly fishing, cycling and hiking resort.

We have been at the forefront of the outdoor industry since its infancy in West Virginia over 30 years ago. Our company currently employs over 20 full and part-time staff. I also for the last 15 years have sat on the Pocahontas County Convention and Visitors Bureau Board of Directors. Our remote mountain setting in Pocahontas County relies on quality wild outdoor places to survive.

All of the counties which the new wilderness areas are located in will benefit both socially and economically from this bill and the high quality of visitors that they will attract. West Virginia's mountain region is the last best place in the mid-Atlantic. This of course is a marketing term which hits close to the heart.

Wilderness designation for those areas included in the Wild Monongahela Act will provide unparalleled primitive and traditional outdoor recreation opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, camping, back country skiing, snowshoeing and much more. These areas and the activities not only keep us competitive in regional and national markets but also provide a much needed and affordable outdoor experience for our local residents.

Protecting our rivers and our forests with wilderness designation is an investment in West Virginia's future. The state's abundance of God given natural resources have been providing coal, natural gas, wood products and chemical ingredients to the Nation and the world for almost 200 years. Our economic landscape has changed, and our natural resources will not last forever.

The northern mountains which fall into the border of the Monongahela National Forest are very important to the future as a region. We have a real connection to our mountains and our forests and have a responsibility to leave these special places as clean and pristine to our children and our children's children.

Pocahontas County is referred to as the birthplace of rivers. There are eight rivers that begin in Pocahontas County. Much of the clean water for the mid-Atlantic originates from our county and bordering counties. This renewable resource cannot be taken for granted.

I would like to see in the future even more Federal protection for our valuable and vanishing clean water resources in the great State of West Virginia, which affects the whole mid-Atlantic region's future and health. While I wholeheartedly support the Wild

Monongahela Act I am concerned about a number of special areas that are not included in the legislation.

Specifically, I would like to see the delegation amend this legislation to include Seneca Creek, Roaring Plains and East Fork of Greenbrier. Like the other special places included in the legislation, these areas represent some of the last truly wild places in the east and they deserve Congress' protection.

Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you once again for allowing me to voice my support for this historic legislation. West Virginians have a strong connection and desire for protecting our one of a kind forest, and the legislation goes a long way toward helping us live up to this responsibility. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Willis follows:]

**Statement of Gil Willis, Owner and Operator of the
Elk River Touring Center/Elk River Inn and Restaurant**

I would like to thank Subcommittee Chairman Grijalva and my Congressman, Nick Rahall and members of the committee for allowing me to speak today in support for the Wild Monongahela Act. This is an historic piece of legislation that will help insure the future of West Virginia's greatest natural treasure—our National Forest.

Let me begin my comments by commending Congressman Rahall and the entire West Virginia congressional delegation for their commitment to working and listening to the people of West Virginia. This bill truly reflects the thoughts and concerns of residents of the Mountain State who appreciate our national forests and the wild areas that are included in those lands. Our Congressional team has developed a proposal that protects our forest and meets the needs of the forest's many users.

I especially appreciated the open process that Congressman Rahall has had and the entire delegation's willingness to meet with me and other concerned West Virginians and their desire to work with all of us to develop a proposal that truly represents West Virginians and will ensure the future of our state's forests for generations to come.

Recreation/Business:

As a member of the West Virginia business community whose business is dependant on our state's wild and wonderful landscape, I am very supportive of efforts to ensure the wild future of our forests. My wife and I own and operate Elk River Inn, Restaurant & Touring Center, which is open year round as a skiing, fly fishing, cycling and hiking resort. We have been at the forefront of the outdoor industry since its infancy in West Virginia for over 30 years. Our company currently employees over 20 full and part time staff. I also for the last 15 years have sat on the Pocahontas County Convention and Visitors Bureau Board of Directors. Our remote mountain setting in Pocahontas County relies on quality wild outdoors places. All of the counties which the new wilderness areas are located in will benefit both socially and economically from this bill and the high quality of the visitors that they will attract. West Virginia's mountain region is "the last best place" in the mid Atlantic. This of course is a marketing term which hits close to the heart.

Wilderness designation for these areas included in the Wild Monongahela Act will provide unparalleled primitive and traditional outdoor recreation opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, camping, backcountry skiing and snowshoeing and much more. These areas and the activities not only keep us competitive in regional and national markets but also provide a much-needed and affordable outdoor experience for our local residents.

Environmental/future generations:

Protecting our rivers and our forests with wilderness designation is an investment in West Virginia's future. The state's abundance of God-given natural resources have been providing coal, natural gas, wood products and chemical ingredients to the nation and world for almost 200 years. Our economic landscape has changed, and our natural resources will not last forever. The northern mountains which fall into and border of the Monongahela National forest are very important to our future as a region. We have a real connection to our mountains and forests and have a responsibility to leave these special places as a clean and pristine environment to our children and our children's children.

Pocahontas County is referred to as the "Birthplace of Rivers". Much of the clean water for the Mid-Atlantic originates from our county. This renewable resource cannot be taken for granted. I would like to see in the future even more federal protection for our valuable and vanishing clean water resources in the great State of West Virginia which affects the whole Mid-Atlantic region's future and health.

Specific places included in the bill

Cranberry Expansion—connected ecologically and recreationally to the existing wilderness with a network of hiking trails that feed into it. It also would protect the scenic backdrop for the world class fly fishing along the Cranberry River that borders the area.

The Big Draft Area—would protect wilderness in the iconic Greenbrier River Valley, where none exists currently. Big Draft is home to excellent trout and bass fishing as well as an excellent whitewater run that would be our state's first whitewater trip in a designated wilderness

The Spice Run Area—a place containing deep dark forest and wonderful mystique. One of the wildest places in our wild and wonderful state that has been a prime spot for hunting and native brook trout angling.

Areas left out of the proposal—we'll have to see what the situation is with this

While I wholeheartedly support the Wild Monongahela Act I am concerned about a number of special areas that are not included in the legislation. Specifically, I would like to see the delegation amend this legislation to include Seneca Creek, Roaring Plains and East Fork of the Greenbrier. Like the others special places included in the legislation, these areas represent some of the last, truly wild places in the east and they deserve protection. As I have mentioned I am deeply concerned about our states water quality and Seneca Creek and East Fork of the Greenbrier River.

Conclusion:

Chairman Grijalva and members of the subcommittee, thank you once again for allowing me to voice my support for this historic legislation. West Virginian's have a strong connection and desire for protecting our one of a kind forests and this legislation goes a long way towards helping us live up to this responsibility.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Mr. Willis, and all our panelists, thank you very much. As I indicated to the first panelist, any testimony or additional material that you have will also be included as part of the record. Thank you.

Mr. Mayor, appreciate your testimony. I think one of the common misconceptions that we deal with in wilderness designation is that this designation would somehow harm local economies. In your testimony, you state that this particular designation could be an asset to the community that you represent.

Could you just talk about what that economic stimulus from a wilderness designation would do for the community you represent?

Mr. MANCHESTER. It is another piece of the marketing puzzle that is an asset for any area that is close by. In Lewisburg's case we are, as I mentioned, about 12 miles away from the Big Draft proposed wilderness area. We have the other end of the spectrum pretty well covered. Anybody who has ever been to the Greenbrier Resort in White Sulphur Springs knows that sort of high end pampering of a resort guest is far removed from wilderness.

Right now, we have no wilderness areas in Greenbrier County, so if you look at the other end of the spectrum, being able to market and to be able to offer amenities on the wilderness end for those people who seek out that on a national basis I think will really help our economy, our small shops, our places.

There are about 100 businesses throughout the state, many of which are in my community, who have signed on in support of the additional wilderness areas simply because they see the value of people coming into town, staying at the shops, shopping there, and dropping some money and improving the local economy.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Reverend Sparks, mostly a comment. I really don't have a question, just extend my appreciation for your testimony. I think your testimony, relative spiritual values in wilderness I believe is very profound, very thoughtful. In the discussions about wilderness, and conservation efforts on public lands and important lands across this country, that testimony is becoming more and more prominent.

I want to thank you for bringing it to the Committee today. Appreciate it very much. Sir.

Rev. SPARKS. Well, thank you. I would say there is also a practical side to our testimony. Just as an example, as we seek tourism coming to West Virginia, through our work in flood recovery our preliminary research a couple of years ago said the churches have already brought \$15 million worth of work projects to West Virginia.

That is not counting those church groups who go out and do whitewater rafting or whatever afterwards. So we are really talking about new spiritual journeying into the wilderness, and we think so there will be a practical dimension from the faith side of this as well.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Mr. Price, one quick question. I think that as the Reverend and the Mayor also have discussed, some comments on what you believe the economic benefits will be. Congratulations on the Blue/Green Initiative. I think it is a very important precedent on this wilderness legislation. Congratulate all the parties for their cooperation on this issue.

First of all, how many members in the AFL-CIO in West Virginia, and second, what do you see those economic benefits being down the road? Sir.

Mr. PRICE. Approximately 60,000 under the West Virginia AFL-CIO representing approximately 420 unions. We see this as a possibility to open up many avenues of business coming in. They like to locate into places where the areas are clean and have beautiful places. Companies like to come into that. All these tourism businesses. It will create businesses.

The union is always for any type of creating jobs for work, whether they be union or nonunion. We are always for that. This could even go into any type of the green-based type of economy, which we hope to get into these. So there is many, many possibilities there that this could create.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, sir. Mr. Bittner, I had a question, but you answered it in your testimony. That had to do with the pressing threats on the Eastern Brook Trout, its habitats and what a wilderness designation would do to help to remedy and protect that. Unless there is something additional you would like to add to the comments you had in your testimony?

Mr. BITTNER. Well, I am glad that you picked that up from the statement. The loose forest litter floor, when that hasn't been compacted, it functions so much as a sponge to hold and absorb that water that is just so critical to us.

Then, studies from the Forest Service have also shown that when you have an intact canopy and you have a rain event, it actually breaks up the size of the raindrops that hit the ground, also helping to disburse and prevent flooding. So anything that we can do

to keep our streams cold and clean is going to benefit the Brook Trout. That is about all I have to contribute.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, sir. Mr. Willis, just same economic question. What do you anticipate as a consequence of these designations, the increase in the amount of business that you receive in your establishment?

Mr. WILLIS. Our county, we are in Pocahontas, which is about 63 percent state and Federal owned, so we have a large, large chunk of the Monongahela National Forest in there, numerous, probably four, five, six state parks. Cranberry Glades, back country and current wilderness areas are in our county.

Our population is about a little over 10,000 residents. The annual income for Pocahontas County's residents is about \$12,000 a year. This economy for years and years was a timber-based. There were some people tanning leather there. As we all know, those industries have moved on, with the exception of the timber industry.

I live right next door to a very large sawmill and a very large land owner, a private operator. So to lay all that out—we also have of course a large ski area, too, the largest in the southeast in the south Snowshoe Resort.

We have become more of a service industry over the last 20 to 30 years, but tourism is not the only thing that is going to keep us living there. We have to kind of coexist with the timber industry and the other services that are going on there. The National Radio Astronomy facility is also there in Greenbank. So we have a real interesting dynamic there for the county.

What has happened over the last 20 years is how Cranberry has impacted my personal economy and my business, and I think the economy of the county, is that people do come and use the wilderness. Some of them are primitive campers. You never see them. You might see their car parked along the road. The other part of that group is staying locally in a hotel, eating out, buying services.

Some of those people like the area enough to where there are a lot of second homes there. We have a lot of retired community. That is the biggest boom right now is second home development. I hope I answered your question.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you very much. Let me thank all of you and turn to Chairman Rahall for any questions he might have. Sir.

Mr. RAHALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I ask my questions, let me observe to this panel that history is in the making today. I sat in this room as a young freshmen Member over 30 years ago when we passed the legislation which established the new River Gorge National River in 1978. In 1983, from this Committee, I advanced the Cranberry Wilderness bill, along with the Lower Fork North and South.

And it was in this room that I proposed the designation that Gauley River National Recreation Area and Bluestone National Scenic River in 1988 and signed into law by then President Reagan. It was here, also, that I moved to create the National Coal Heritage Area in southern West Virginia, and to put the Upper New River in wild and scenic study status.

Today, we are once again advancing the notion that we in West Virginia while making solid contributions to our nation's energy and security, we will draw the line when it comes to preserving

some of our most special places, that we recognize that we have a duty to future generations to do this and this, then, is the stuff of legacy.

To those of you who have come forward, know that after we are all long gone, as you have referred to in your testimony, Mr. Mayor, what we do here today will stand as testimony to our beliefs, our culture and our society.

Gil, you have very well described Pocahontas County. My wife and I have stayed with you and Mary in your place of business. We have seen how you coexist with what is going on around you, and you have very accurately described what Pocahontas County is all about.

You have also described from the business perspective what this means to economic development, as has the Mayor in answer to Chairman Grijalva's questions, because as Chairman Grijalva referred to, we often hear about that misperception from the business community that we are going to cost jobs in developing wilderness areas, but we know that to be untrue and that just the opposite is what we are doing here today.

It is the economic value of wilderness that is important to our people and important for producing jobs, Mike, as you have so intimately been involved with over your years with the AFL-CIO.

I do have one question for Mr. Bittner, and you have given very excellent testimony and responded to the Chairman well. Can you talk a bit about the importance of headwaters protection that these wilderness designations would provide and how that can benefit the communities that are downstream from these headwaters?

Mr. BITTNER. All right. The least nice way to put it is what we call the delusion solution, OK? You have most of my neighbors are involved in agricultural production. They run cattle, they have poultry operations, they water their livestock, they spread composted litter and what not on their fields, which some of the nutrients in that eventually winds up into the watersheds in their area.

As regulatory moves happen to deal with the Chesapeake Bay, because I live in the Potomac drainage, move upstream from us and try to restrict what they can do because of its effect all the way down in the bay, having the sources of really cold, really clean, absolutely pure water flowing in there provides a buffer for what they can do on their operations so that they have regulatory wiggle room.

We saw that just a few years back on the North Fork of the South Branch where it became an impaired watershed, and the groups of farmers got together, changed some of their practices, instituted other management practices and got that taken off of the impaired waters list, working together.

A stream like Seneca Creek or some of the others that are either proposed or in the legislation provides that source of water to provide essentially a diluting effect for downstream producers.

Mr. RAHALL. Thank you.

Mr. WILLIS. Sir, could I also comment on that? I live on the headwaters of the Elk River, and I have about eight miles of what is called Old Field Fork which is above my farm that I live on. I am literally right on the river. Headwaters are so important, and it

takes a long time living in that area to understand intimately what is going on with nature and how things fit together and evolve up in those areas.

This part of West Virginia gets a lot of snow, and it gets a lot of rain. We have four true seasons throughout the year which make it spectacular of course. As an example, last year when we had this terrible drought on the western side of the state along the Ohio River, Virginia, North Carolina, Ohio, up and down the east coast, we continued to get rain in my valley.

I am at 3,000 feet, and I am right on the river, so the ridges behind me go up to about 5,000 feet. So this whole area from the southern part of the Cranberry all the way to Canaan, a little east of us, a little west of us, Elkins is about the dividing line on the western side, we are in this rain zone, and when everyone else is in drought we are getting rain there.

So it is such a valuable resource because all these springs up there continue to produce clean water. Last year it was up into August. So it is just a resource that is sort of in some ways being overlooked and in some ways it is not. Today, we are not overlooking it. We are looking out for it and we hope are going to protect it.

These headwater areas also have a critical part to do with our flooding problem in West Virginia. The state and Federal government has spent a lot of money in the last 30 years with the 1985 flood, the 1993 flood, the 1996 flood. So more of these areas that are protected and have less activity going on in them, the more that water is held back, communities don't suffer, people don't get relocated.

It is a chain reaction after a flood. I know, Congressman Rahall, you were in the middle of the 1985 flood, and the two other floods and it floods all over this country, but in our region it is a very serious thing. I think that headwater protection here today and down the road, as I mentioned in my testimony, is critical to fish species, to communities surviving, clean water, agriculture and the list goes on and on.

Mr. RAHALL. Beautiful. Beautiful. Thank you, Gil. Thank you, Bob, Mike, Reverend Sparks. This is beautiful, too. Very well put together, and I want more copies of it. Mayor, thank you for being with us today. Thank each of you. Excellent testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you. Mr. Bishop.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. I will make this fairly brief. To the five of you who have testified today, I want to thank you for your willingness to come here and speak before this particular Subcommittee in this room. It is very kind of you. I appreciate the testimony. It was well-delivered, and the results we will have from it.

I want to make two comments that I think I found as I was listening to this presentation of this hearing on this particular bill that is being introduced. Whenever you deal with the concept of wilderness red flags are thrown up all over the place. Coming up with a consensus on wilderness is a difficult path, too.

I think Mr. Rahall in the introduction of the bill that is before us has been able to deal with that consensus concept. It is difficult, especially in the environment we have here, to have bipartisan

input, but this consensus bill has bipartisan input. I think that is very important.

Not only does it do that, it meets the Federal forest standards for the seven parcels that are being considered here today and does not impinge on successful management practices by the forest. So, indeed, there is something unique about the legislation that is here today in the fact that it is a consensus, it is a bipartisan consensus and it can move forward in that manner very effectively, probably more effectively than some other things we have here today.

Appreciate the testimony, also, on the byproducts that this would be. I recognize that in river health as well as fishing health is concerned, river pooling is extremely important, especially you have a species that does any kind of spawning. That pooling concept is much different to accomplish in new growth forests as it is into old growth forests. Has a different connotation to it.

Those are all important elements to be there. I was specifically pleased to hear the concept that this would not be an impediment to the industry of the area of West Virginia because most of the industry with which you are dealing is done on private lands. West Virginia should be complimented for having a very healthy and positive ratio between private lands and public lands.

If we in the west had that same kind of ratio, there would be fewer problems that we would have concerned, and we would be able to solve more of our own problems and actually open up the goodness of individuals when you empower them to take their own responsibility of their own issues.

I am waiting for that day when we have the same ratio that you have, Mr. Rahall, from the State of Utah because it makes a difference, and it solves a lot of these problems ahead of time. So I appreciate your testimony and being here, and I appreciate the opportunity and thank you. Thank you very much.

Mr. RAHALL. Would the gentleman from Utah yield just one final—

Mr. BISHOP. Do I have to?

Mr. RAHALL. Well, I am just going to offer an invitation for the next time your caucus holds their retreat at the Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs right next to Lewisburg that after the passage of this proposal, perhaps more of your colleagues on your side of the aisle will be able to get out into the wilderness and experience what this legislation is going to create.

Mr. BISHOP. You notice, first of all, that when he is the Chairman, you have to yield, but, yes, I would be happy to do that if you can come out and see some private timber harvesting in Utah, if it ever existed again.

Mr. GRIJALVA. That is the bipartisan spirit that I love. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the legislation. Ranking Member Bishop, thank you for your comments. Mr. Holtrop and the five panelists before us today, thank you so much. With that, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:10 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]