

HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES  
HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 9  
FEBRUARY 2, 2005

EXHIBIT 9  
DATE 2.2.05  
HB HJ9

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee: For the record my name is Ellen Engstedt, representing the Montana Wood Products Association. We strongly support House Joint Resolution 9 brought forth by Rep. Barrett.

Montana has over 22 million acres of classified forestland. Almost 10 million federal acres (43 percent of the total) are reserved or unavailable for harvest of wood products. Of this 3.4 million acres are in designated wilderness, national parks and monuments. Additionally, 6.2 million acres of this total are also unavailable for harvest due to their status as wilderness study areas, roadless, and other land set-aside areas. So, you can see the suitable timber base on federal lands under which the wood products industry can operate shrinks quickly.

The remainder of the forestland is 5.2 million acres of national forests; 727,000 acres of state trust lands; 5.4 million acres of private non-industrial; and 1.6 million acres of forest industry owned.

The proposed study would be beneficial in a number of ways. It would publicly identify the acres Congress has officially designated for wilderness. It would also publicly identify the defacto wilderness areas that Congress requested be studied for possible wilderness but has never officially passed legislation for that designation. These lands and the roadless designated lands are the ones in limbo and should require the most attention. The question should be addressed as to whether they are lands that are protected under wilderness criterion or are they lands that should be considered multiple use thereby allowing more human activity, including timber harvesting.

A very important component of the study proposal to my membership is the issue of impacts these areas are having on local, rural communities, including economic and social. The announcement last week of the closure of a family-owned sawmill in Eureka putting 90 Montana families out of work drives this issue very close to home.

In Lincoln County 78 percent of the land base is federally owned, including wilderness, wilderness study, roadless, and national forest. The question begs to be asked whether the locking up of this land mass was a factor in the announced closure. The owner said lack of timber supply from the Kootenai National Forest is the reason for shutdown. The proposed study could determine if the other land designations also have contributed to the mill's demise and whether those designations could have the same effect on other facilities.

I urge your support of HJ 9. Thank you for your time and attention.