



House Natural Resources Committee
House Joint Resolution 9
Testimony of Tim Baker, Interim Executive Director
Montana Wilderness Association
February 2, 2005

EXHIBIT 10
DATE 2.2.05
HB HJ9

Chairman Peterson, and members of the House Natural Resources committee:

My name is Tim Baker, I am the Interim Executive Director of the Montana Wilderness Association, and I appear before you today on behalf of the 6,000 members of MWA.

House Joint Resolution 9 proposes an interim study of Montana's publicly owned wilderness quality lands to analyze the impacts of those lands on Montanans.

The Montana Wilderness Association believes that such a study could provide benefits and valuable information to Montanans about the value of pristine public lands to the state's waters and watersheds, wildlife, people, and economy.

Such a study would be a substantial undertaking, so it is important to make sure that it is a successful effort, one that brings Montanans together in an open and full dialogue that provides a complete picture as to the state of our wild public lands, and their importance to our everyday lives.

For this reason, we're offering amendments to make it clear that the study will fully consider the benefits to the state of these special places, in addition to any negative consequences that may result.

For example, studies over the last several years have found that our wilderness lands actually stimulate the economy of the surrounding areas:

- A 2003 study found that wild public lands in and around the Flathead region are a primary engine for the local economy.
- A 2004 study found that the presence of wild public lands in the west are amenities that draw people and businesses to locate here, and that the existence of these lands actually boosts local economies.
- A 2000 study found that over 300 small family-owned Montana outfitters and guest ranches make their living from our wild public lands, contributing \$107 million to the state's economy and creating over 4,000 jobs. Many of these businesses are found in rural communities.

Similarly, to look at these wilderness lands only in isolation could provide a skewed perspective about how these areas are managed and their relative importance to our lives.

For example, the resolution requests that the condition of these lands are to be evaluated for "infestations of insects," "the presence of noxious weeds," and the "likelihood of extreme wildfire." To understand the role that our public wilderness lands may provide in regard to these concerns, one must look at surrounding public lands as well.

For a visual aid, I ask the Committee to look at a map prepared by the Forest Service for the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest, assessing existing weed infestations on public lands. You'll note that 93% of the weed infestations occur outside of wilderness and roadless areas.

According to Montana's State Weed Plan, a key component of the strategy to combat weeds is prevention, and the first step in prevention is to protect those places that aren't infested. Clearly, at least on the Beaverhead Forest, keeping our wild roadless areas intact would be the first action item in fighting weeds. But you might miss this point if you focus only on weed infestations on wilderness lands.

Fire is an emotional topic with strong feelings on all sides. A 2000 study by the Forest Service found that fires are almost twice as likely to occur in roaded areas, than on our roadless lands. So it would be important to examine the fire risks associated with public wilderness lands in the context of surrounding public lands. In my packet is a publication on wildfire that we did in January 2002 that may be helpful to you.

We're also offering a few amendments to give more context to the resolution:

- Providing more background on national forest Wilderness Study Areas;
- Providing a more accurate statement directly from the Wilderness Act as to what Congress intended when they adopted the Act in 1964;
- Clarifying what is meant by the phrase "land set-asides" to avoid future confusion over the nature of this resolution; and
- Giving the responsibility for the study to the Environmental Quality Council, which seems like the logical forum.

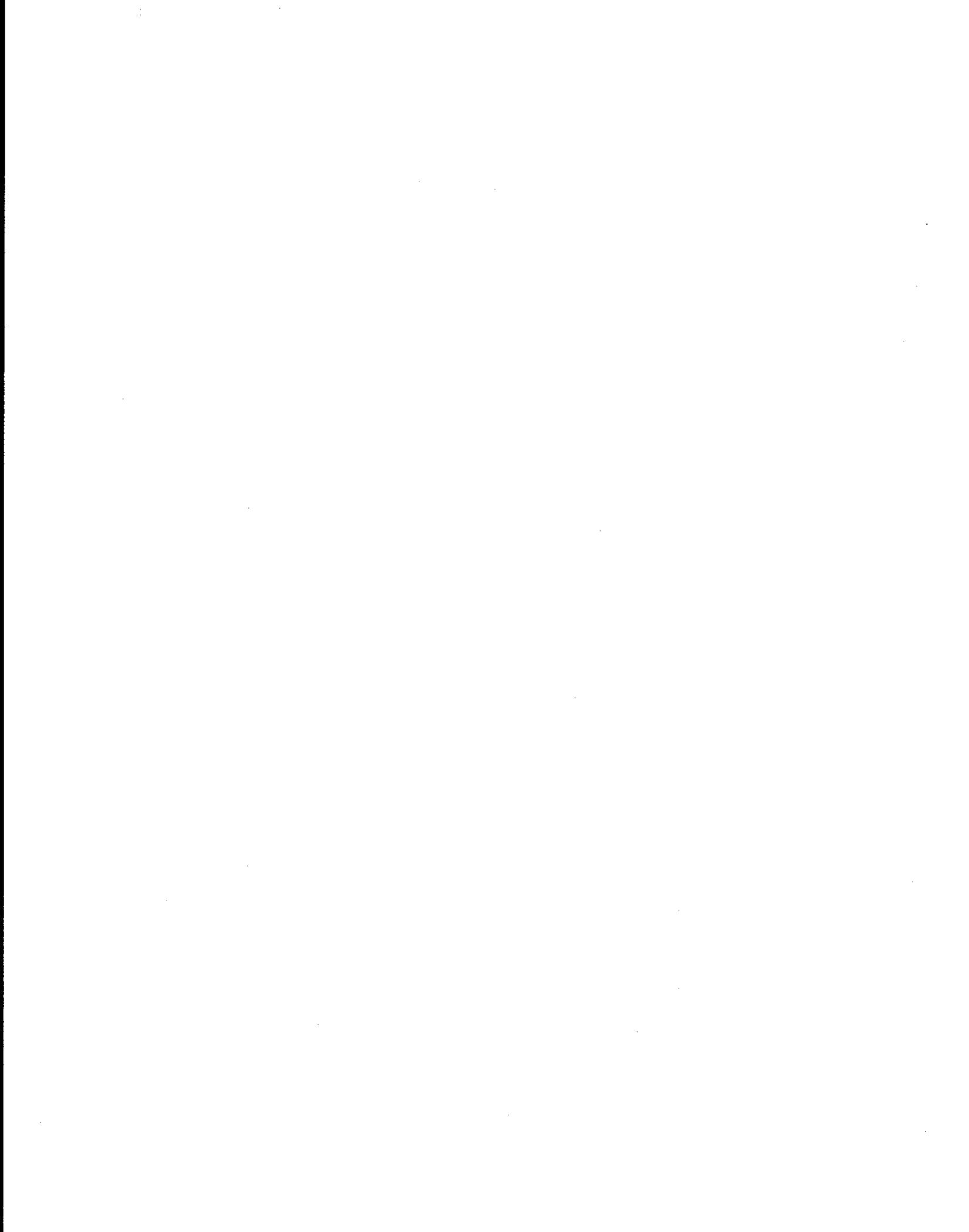
In closing, the Montana Wilderness Association believes that, with our offered amendments, HJ 9 could further meaningful public dialogue about the importance of our wild public lands and the future of those pristine places that are the foundation for our state's wild heritage.

With our amendments, we support a "do pass" recommendation on HJ 9. If our amendments are not accepted or adopted, we oppose HJ 9. Thank you for your time and attention.

Amendments to HJ 9
Offered by the Montana Wilderness Association
February 2, 2005

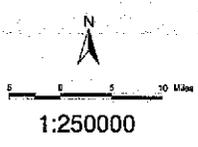
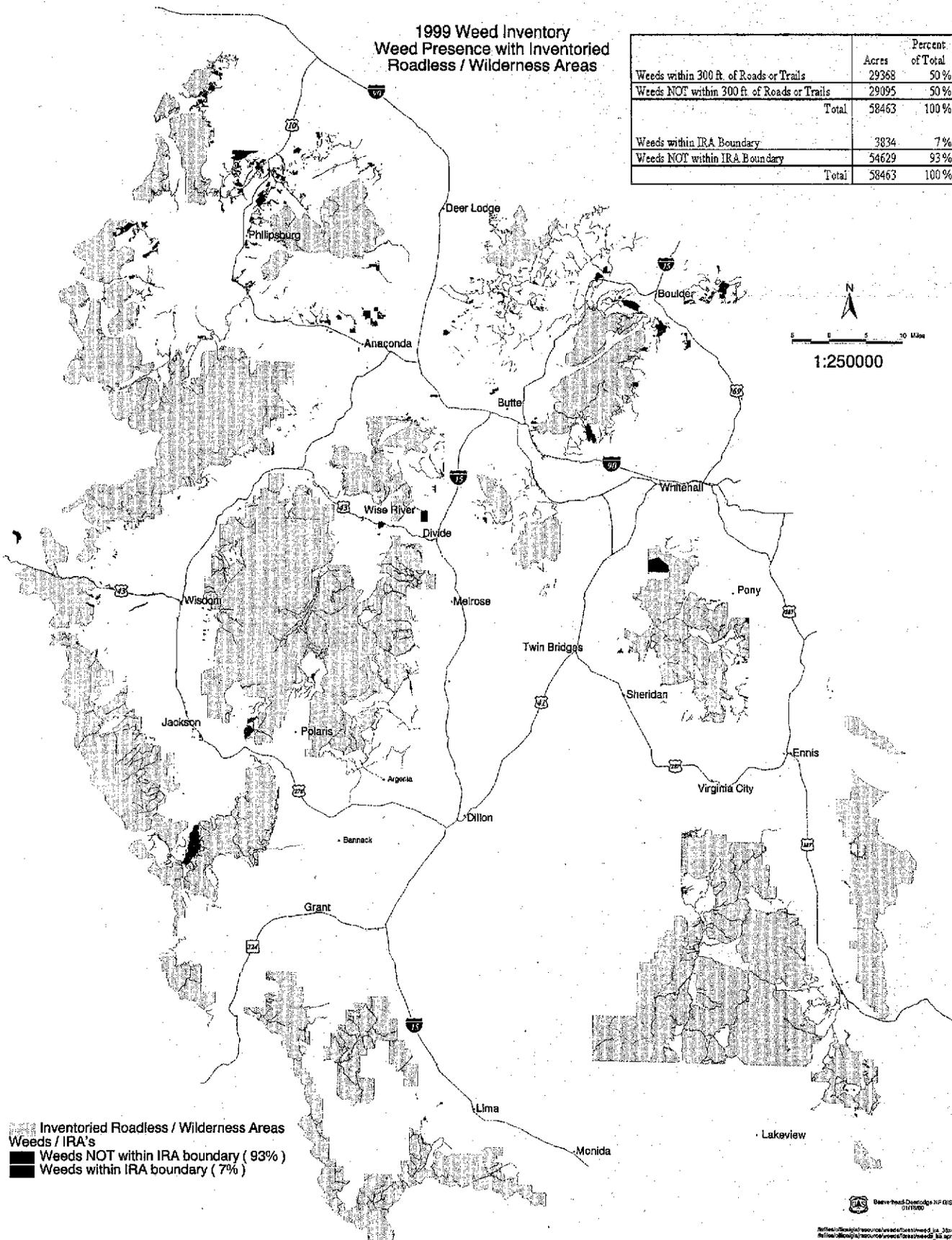
1. Page 1, Line 14, strike: "intent of leaving lands for preservation and protection in their natural condition" and insert "to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource for wilderness"
2. Page 1, Line 19, insert:
"WHEREAS, Montana has 7 Wilderness Study Areas on national forest lands which total 663,000 acres;

WHEREAS, Montana has other federal public lands that are managed to protect their wilderness character (also referred to herein as "land set-aside areas");"
3. Page 1, Line 24, strike: "Legislative Council be requested to designate an appropriate interim committee, pursuant to section 5-5-217, MCA, or direct sufficient staff resources to" and insert "Environmental Quality Council"
4. Page 1, Line 25, strike: "and impact" and insert "condition, impacts, and benefits"
5. Page 1, Line 26, strike: "acres in Montana" and insert "areas, wilderness study areas, and other federal public lands in Montana that are managed to protect their wilderness character"
6. Page 2, Line 5, strike "impact" and insert "impacts and benefits"
7. Page 2, Line 9, strike the second "and"
8. Page 2, Line 10, after "impacts" insert "and benefits"
9. Page 2, Line 11, strike "on" and insert "in regard to" and strike the period and insert "; and"
10. Page 2, Line 12, insert:
"(7) evaluating the condition, health, status, impacts and benefits of wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, and other land set-aside areas in relation to the management of adjacent public lands as a whole."
11. Page 2, lines 12 and 13, strike in entirety.

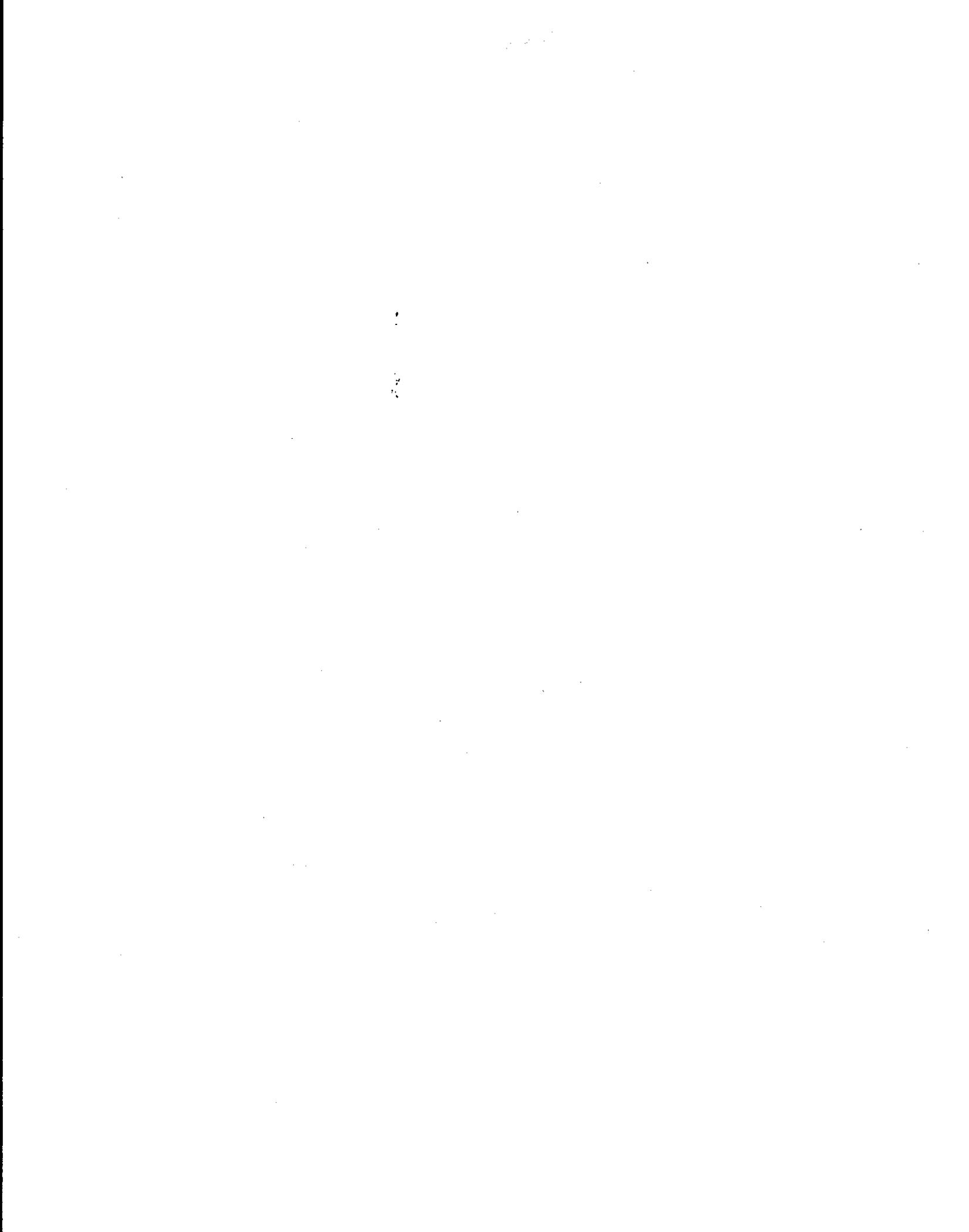


1999 Weed Inventory Weed Presence with Inventoried Roadless / Wilderness Areas

	Acres	Percent of Total
Weeds within 300 ft. of Roads or Trails	29368	50 %
Weeds NOT within 300 ft. of Roads or Trails	29095	50 %
Total	58463	100 %
Weeds within IRA Boundary	3834	7 %
Weeds NOT within IRA Boundary	54629	93 %
Total	58463	100 %



 Inventoried Roadless / Wilderness Areas
 Weeds / IRA's
 Weeds NOT within IRA boundary (93%)
 Weeds within IRA boundary (7%)



A special publication of the Montana Wilderness Association

WILDERNESS

Asking the Hard Questions

When 15 smokejumpers dropped into bone-dry grasslands north of Helena in 1949, they were doing their best thinking—but it wasn't enough to save them. As they prepared to fight the Mann Gulch Fire, they gauged its speed based on patterns of fires west of the Divide. Theirs was a tragic mistake; the fire spread through the landscape faster and wilder than they could ever anticipate. Only three firefighters survived.

The Mann Gulch Fire served as a turning point in firefighting history. From it emerged new tools, policies, and training still in use today. The same holds true for other turning points in fire history: the Big Blowup of 1910, which led to a

Stakeholders Speak

Dr. Stephen J. Pyne, fire historian and author of *Year of the Fires. The Story of the Great Fires of 1910.*



We need to rethink our conception of fire. We continue to treat it not as a biological matter but as a mechanical problem—starting, stopping, shooting biomass around. Rather, removing and introducing fire is much more akin to adding and subtracting species.

behaved. Like a hurricane or a flood, it was an act of nature that we as humans were powerless to stop. Now we are hearing all kinds of proposals for commercial logging and thinning to "fireproof" our forests. We cannot fireproof our forests, nor should we. But we can do our best to "fireproof" our homes.

Conrad Burns, U.S. Senator (R-Mont.)



This is an oversize pamphlet.

ONLY scanned a portion for research.

