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SENATE NATURAL RESOURCES
EXHIBIT NO. 5
DATE 3/18/05
BILL NO. HJ 9

Senate Natural Resources Committee
House Joint Resolution 9
Testimony of Tim Baker, Executive Director
Montana Wilderness Association
March 18, 2005

Chairman Roush, and members of the Senate Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Tim Baker, I am the 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 opposes this resolution in its current form.

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.

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 Glacier National Park and adjacent wild public lands in the Flathead region are an economic 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 can actually boost 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.

But we oppose this resolution as written.

Given some of the vague language in the resolution and the statements made by its supporters in the House NR Committee and on the House floor, we believe that some of the proponents are far more interested in political mischief than meaningful study and dialogue.

It appears that proponents want to do by a study resolution what this Committee would not let them do in a bill: interfere with the authority the Governor may have under the Bush Administration's final Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

Keep it wild. | The Montana Wilderness Association educates the public and works at the local, state, and national levels to protect Montana's wilderness and traditional recreation opportunities for everyone.