



A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA URGING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO REMOVE THE HIDDEN PASTURE WILDERNESS STUDY AREA FROM FURTHER WILDERNESS STUDY DESIGNATION.

WHEREAS, in 1993, the Bureau of Land Management recommended that Congress exclude the Hidden Pasture Creek Wilderness Study Area located west of Dell, Montana, from the wilderness system; and

WHEREAS, more than 15,000 acres in this area is de facto wilderness as a result of inaction for several decades making it difficult, and in some cases impossible, for the residents of Southwest Montana to conduct business in this area; and

WHEREAS, the southern boundary of this wilderness study area is a county road that has historically been, and remains, the principal transportation route for those living and using the Big Sheep Basin for ranching and recreation as well as by the Bureau of Land Management, the United States Forest Service, and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; and

WHEREAS, power lines from the local electric cooperative crisscross over the road because the canyon is narrow, crooked, and very steep, putting portions of the line in the wilderness study area, subjecting the utility to restrictions that limit access for maintenance, repair, or improvement to this line; and

WHEREAS, the designation precludes Beaverhead County from addressing transportation safety issues, including widening the county road to prevent head-on and side-swipe accidents that have involved travelers unfamiliar with the road, area ranchers, and the Lima School bus, which travels this gravel road twice daily during the school year; and

WHEREAS, some projects require a specific angular-shaped rock that is accessible to larger dump trucks, and this material is located along the north side of the county road in the wilderness study area; and

WHEREAS, the center irrigation pivot owned by a local rancher crosses approximately 2.5 acres of

land included in the wilderness study area. Also, the rancher owns 8 acres of land within the wilderness study area. The Bureau of Land Management will not trade land with the rancher, instead requiring him at great expense to install barricades and an auto-reverse option on the sprinkler; and

WHEREAS, the east boundary of the area is within 5 miles of Dell, Interstate 15, Highway 91, and the Union Pacific Railroad track, and has historically, since the early 1900s, been used for logging and coal mining. There are numerous roads as well as the rock quarry used for decades by residents, local contractors, Beaverhead County, and the Union Pacific Railroad; and

WHEREAS, the wilderness study area designation prevents some forms of weed control and fire prevention measures that are available in other areas; and

WHEREAS, area residents, the local telephone and electrical utilities, and the commissioners of Beaverhead County have written letters and sent petitions to the Montana Congressional Delegation asking that the Hidden Pasture Creek Wilderness Study Area be released from further wilderness consideration, in accordance with Bureau of Land Management recommendations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the United States Congress be urged to remove the Hidden Pasture Creek Wilderness Study Area from further wilderness study designation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Secretary of State send copies of this resolution to the President of the United States, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, and each member of the Montana Congressional Delegation.

- END -

I hereby certify that the within bill,
SJ 7, originated in the Senate.

Secretary of the Senate

President of the Senate

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2021.

Speaker of the House

Signed this _____ day
of _____, 2021.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 7

INTRODUCED BY J. WELBORN, D. ANKNEY, K. WALSH, T. WELCH

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