

**Statement of
Mike Pool
Deputy Director
Bureau of Land Management
Department of the Interior
House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
H.R. 752, Molalla River Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
March 8, 2012**

Thank you for inviting the Department of the Interior to testify on H.R. 752, the Molalla River Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The Department supports H.R. 752.

Background

The Molalla River begins its journey to the sea on the western slopes of the Cascade Mountains of Oregon. At an elevation of 4,800 feet, the Molalla flows undammed for 49 miles west and north until it joins the Willamette River. For years, the Molalla suffered from too much negative attention from its visitors, including vandalism. To address these problems, local residents joined together several years ago and formed the Molalla River Alliance (MRA). The MRA, a nonprofit all volunteer organization, has over 45 public and private partners, including Federal, State, and local government agencies, user groups, and conservationists. Working cooperatively with the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) local field office, the MRA has provided the Molalla the care it needed. Today, we are pleased that this subcommittee is considering designating approximately 21 miles of the river as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The Molalla River is home to important natural and cultural resources. Protection of this watershed is crucial as the source of drinking water for local communities and the important spawning habitat it provides for several fish species, including salmon and steelhead. Within an hour's drive of the metropolitan areas of Portland and Salem, Oregon, the Molalla watershed provides significant recreational opportunities for fishing, canoeing, mountain biking, horseback riding, hiking, hunting, camping, and swimming. A 20-mile hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian trail system draws over 65,000 visitors annually.

H.R. 752

H.R. 752 proposes to designate 15.1 miles of the Molalla River and 6.2 miles of the Table Rock Fork of the Molalla as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. In earlier planning analyses, the BLM evaluated the Molalla River and the Table Rock Fork of the Molalla River and determined that most of these two rivers should be considered for designation as wild and scenic rivers. As a result, the designation called for in H.R. 752 would be largely consistent with management currently in place, and would cause few changes to BLM's current administration of most of this area. The 5,500-acre Table Rock Wilderness, designated by Congress in 1984, is embraced by the Molalla and Table Rock Fork, and designation of these river segments would reinforce the protections in place for the wilderness area.

Wild and scenic rivers are designated by Congress in one of three categories: wild, scenic, or recreational. Differing management proscriptions apply for each of these designations. H.R. 752 specifies that these river segments be classified as recreational. This classification is consistent with the strong recreational values of this area, as well as the presence of roads along the course of the river segments and numerous dispersed campsites along its shorelines.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the designation of the Molalla Wild and Scenic River. The Department of the Interior looks forward to welcoming these units into the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System.

**Statement of
Mike Pool
Deputy Director
Bureau of Land Management
Department of the Interior
House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests & Public Lands
H.R. 3377, Pine Forest Range Recreation Enhancement Act
March 8, 2012**

Thank you for inviting the Department of the Interior to testify on H.R. 3377, the Pine Forest Range Recreation Enhancement Act. The Department of the Interior supports H.R. 3377, which designates the Pine Forest Range Wilderness in Humboldt County, Nevada, on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). We urge the Congress to move swiftly to pass this bill.

It is gratifying to see Congress moving to protect this area that was highlighted in Secretary Salazar's November 2011 *Preliminary Report on BLM Lands Deserving Protection as National Conservation Areas, Wilderness or Other Conservation Designations*. There is a long history of bipartisan support in Congress for the conservation of America's special places. Members from both parties have been essential to passing every major public lands bill that has been enacted in recent years. This type of cooperative and bipartisan approach to designating special lands for protection as wilderness, national conservation areas, or similar designations has historically been a regular practice for Congress. The designation of the Pine Forest Range has strong support from County government and local citizens. It is a wonderful example of how people can come together to protect one of America's real gems.

Background

The Pine Forest Range in northern Nevada's arid Great Basin is a rare and exceptional area of abundant streams and clear, cold subalpine lakes. Nestled in a cirque and fed by snowmelt and springs, these lakes are not only visually stunning but also possess an excellent trout fishery. The lakes are surrounded by a rare remnant population of white bark and limber pines. Stands of quaking aspen and mountain mahogany are also found throughout the proposed wilderness. Fall brings an abundance of color found in few other places in northern Nevada.

The spectacular scenery and vistas, combined with outstanding recreational opportunities, draw thousands of visitors annually. Despite being one of the most highly visited recreational areas in the region, the proposed wilderness still appears pristine. Day hiking, horseback riding, rock climbing, hunting, fishing, and camping are all popular in the area. Visitors enjoy a true primitive recreation experience, without trails or facilities. Even during peak visitation periods, solitude is easy to find in the rugged terrain. Abundant wildlife coveted by sportsmen includes trophy mule deer, antelope, bighorn sheep, mountain lion, and chukar.

A wide range of stakeholders began working cooperatively in 2009 and 2010 to bring together diverse interests in a grass-roots effort to protect this special area. In the fall of 2010, the

Humboldt County Commission voted unanimously to approve the final recommendations of the Pine Forest Range Working Group to designate the Pine Forest Range Wilderness. The Nevada State Legislature subsequently passed a resolution praising the process used in arriving at the consensus represented by H.R. 3377.

H.R. 3377

H.R. 3377 proposes to designate the 26,000-acre Pine Forest Range Wilderness in Humboldt County, Nevada, on public land managed by the BLM. This wilderness area is largely formed by the Blue Lakes and Alder Creek Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). Under the bill, approximately 1,150 acres of land within those WSAs would not be designated as wilderness and would be released from WSA status, thereby allowing the consideration of a full range of multiple uses.

Section 13 of H.R. 3377 provides for land exchanges to improve the manageability of the Pine Forest Range Wilderness Area and nearby public lands while likewise allowing private landowners the opportunity to consolidate their holdings. The land exchanges are discretionary and would be completed consistent with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and other applicable laws. The BLM supports this provision. In addition, these land acquisitions may be undertaken through existing authorities such as purchase or donation.

The Pine Forest Range Wilderness meets the definition of wilderness; the land and its community of life are largely untrammled. It has retained its primeval character and has been influenced primarily by the forces of nature, with outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation or solitude. The BLM strongly supports this designation. We would like to work with the sponsor and the Committee on some minor technical modifications to management language to insure consistency and to ensure a proper map reference.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 3377. We look forward to the swift passage of this legislation designating the Pine Forest Range Wilderness.

**Statement of
Mike Pool
Deputy Director
Bureau of Land Management
Department of the Interior
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests
H.R. 3436, Wild Rogue Wilderness Area Expansion
March 8, 2012**

Thank you for inviting the Department of the Interior to testify on H.R. 3436, which would expand the existing Wild Rogue Wilderness by over 58,000 acres and extend the existing Rogue Wild and Scenic River by designating an additional 35 Rogue River tributaries to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The Department supports H.R. 3436, and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee and the members of the Oregon delegation on modifications to the bill to improve manageability.

Additional protection for the Rogue River was highlighted in Secretary Salazar's November 2011 *Preliminary Report to Congress on BLM Lands Deserving Protection as National Conservation Areas, Wilderness or Other Conservation Designations*. H.R. 3436 has wide support at state and local levels, as well as from a wide range of local citizens and stakeholders. It is a wonderful example of how people can come together to propose protection of such a beautiful and dramatic area.

Background

The Rogue River's headwaters begin near Crater Lake. It then rushes 215 miles through the mountains and valleys of southwestern Oregon, eventually emptying into the Pacific Ocean near the town of Gold Beach. Over millions of years, the Rogue has patiently carved its way through western Oregon's mountains creating 3,000 foot canyons, rugged valleys and inspiring scenery. Dense, old-growth forests flank the Rogue providing habitat for older forest-dependent species, including the Northern Spotted Owl and the Marbled Murrelet. The cold, clear waters of the river provide a home for Pacific salmon, steelhead trout, and green sturgeon.

Recreationists are drawn to the entire Rogue River watershed to experience nature in a multitude of ways. These recreationists are a critical economic engine for local economies and include commercial and sport fishing, rafting and jet boat tours, and hiking and backpacking. The untamed landscape offers countless opportunities for challenge, exploration, and discovery.

The 36,000-acre Wild Rogue Wilderness was designated by an Act of Congress (Public Law 95-237) in 1978. Located primarily on lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service, the Wild Rogue includes approximately 8,600 acres of lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). In 1968, Congress passed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Public Law 90-542), establishing the Wild and Scenic River System and designating eight original rivers. As one of these initial eight rivers, Oregon's Rogue River has long been recognized for its beauty, exceptional recreational opportunities and extraordinary resource values.

For several years, Representative DeFazio and other members of the Oregon Congressional delegation have worked with local stakeholders, governments, recreationists, and the conservation community to enhance protections of the Rogue River watershed. H.R. 3436 is a result of those concerted efforts.

H.R. 3436

H.R. 3436 proposes to enlarge the existing Wild Rogue Wilderness by adding more than 58,000 acres of land administered by the BLM. The bill also extends the existing Rogue Wild and Scenic River by adding 93 miles of 35 tributaries of the Rogue to the wild and scenic river system. In addition, the bill withdraws 48 miles of 19 other Rogue River tributaries from operation of the land laws, mining laws, and mineral leasing laws, and prohibits the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) from licensing new water resource projects and associated facilities along these tributaries.

The BLM supports the expansion of the Wild Rogue Wilderness as provided by H.R. 3436. This wild and rugged area is largely untrammled. It has retained its primeval character and has been influenced primarily by the forces of nature, with outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation or solitude. Protection of these wilderness characteristics is largely consistent with the current management framework for these lands. We would like the opportunity to work with the bill sponsor and the Committee on some modifications to the map and the legislation.

The BLM also recommends that the legislation include language directing the Secretary of the Interior to manage the BLM portion of the current Wild Rogue Wilderness. When the Wild Rogue Wilderness was established in 1978, the legislation called for the Secretary of Agriculture to manage all of the lands within the wilderness boundary. With this expansion we would like to correct that previous oversight and ensure that both the original and the additional BLM-managed lands within the Wild Rogue are managed by the BLM. Management of this area would be a cooperative exercise with the U. S. Forest Service and involve many of the same staff that jointly manage the Rogue's successful river program.

The bill excludes over 500 acres of BLM-managed lands on the north side of the river within the external boundaries of the wilderness addition from designation as wilderness. This could leave these lands open to future development and potentially complicate management of the surrounding lands as wilderness. These lands show visible effects of past logging activities and existing primitive roads that do not meet the naturalness criteria of the Wilderness Act. The BLM would like to discuss the possibility of designating them as "potential wilderness" (as was done, for example, to California's Elkhorn Ridge Potential Wilderness Area through the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act – Public Law 109-362). If these lands were to be actively or passively restored to wilderness conditions in the future, they could then be formally added to the Wild Rogue Wilderness.

The BLM would also like to work with the Oregon delegation on boundary modifications of the wilderness expansion to improve manageability. There are portions of the proposed wilderness where minor modifications to follow a road would allow for a more recognizable and manageable boundary. In addition, a few areas identified for wilderness designation on the southeast side of the proposed expansion may raise manageability concerns. Specifically, the

inclusion of areas south of Bailey Creek and east of the Rogue appears to present conflicts with existing uses. The BLM would like the opportunity to discuss these conflicts further with the Committee and the bill's sponsor.

In 1968, when Congress established the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, it designated the Rogue as one of the original eight rivers included in this system. Section two of H.R. 3436 further enhances that initial designation by adding specific tributaries of the Rogue to the national system, thus conserving the greater Rogue River watershed. In general, the proposed stream segments are located in steep sloped canyons with mature and structurally complex forest stands that have high conservation values. We support maintaining and enhancing those conservation values through this designation.

Finally, H.R. 3436 (Section 3) prohibits FERC from licensing the construction of any new water or power projects along 48 miles of 19 Rogue River tributaries. Additionally, the bill would withdraw land for one-quarter mile along either side of these tributaries from operation of the land laws, mining laws and mineral leasing laws. This withdrawal will protect valid existing rights but would prohibit the sale or exchange of any of these federal lands; the location of new mining claims; new mineral or geothermal leases; and sales of mineral materials. These withdrawals will provide additional protections to this important watershed, and the Department supports these provisions.

Conclusion

One of the earliest masters of the American western novel, Zane Grey, proclaimed the historic beauty of this area, and made it his home. "The happiest lot of any angler" wrote Grey "would be to live somewhere along the banks of the Rogue River, most beautiful stream of Oregon."

H.R. 3436 seeks to preserve and protect the beauty Zane Grey saw for generations to come. This bill is the product of many years of discussions and collaboration with the local community, stakeholders, and other interested parties by the Oregon Congressional delegation and we would like to be part of those continuing discussions. The Department urges swift passage of H.R. 3436 and looks forward to welcoming these important conservation additions into the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System.