

## DISSENTING VIEWS

We oppose H.R. 886, the proposed Wild Sky Wilderness area located in the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Presently, almost 42 percent of the forest is congressionally designated Wilderness. Moreover, during the last U.S. Forest Service wilderness evaluation in 1990, approximately 33,000 acres of the proposed 106,000 acres was identified as suitable for wilderness. In 2003, however, the U.S. Forest Service testified that 90,000 acres of the proposed area would be appropriate for wilderness. It also concluded that 16,000 acres were not well-suited for wilderness because it included previously harvested and roaded areas, private land (some with patented mining claims that would be acquired by the Forest Service under HR 886), and vital access roads.

We have several concerns with this legislation and the following remarks highlight the most prominent among them.

First, there is a lack of demonstrated widespread local support. While the sponsors of the legislation in both Houses claim broad public support, during the 109th Congress the Committee received over 200 letters of concern from local officials and community members near Wild Sky. The Committee at that time had also seen a copy of a petition against Wild Sky with close to 2,000 signatures from people living in the affected communities. Due to the restrictions of designated wilderness there are wildfire, land slide, and flood protection measures that would no longer be available to at-risk communities.

Second, the sponsors also have claimed the bill would provide adequate recreational access to the area by maintaining and building new trails. However, the Forest Service has stated that under current management practices and due to ESA and late successional reserve (LSR) requirements it is likely no new trails would be constructed. Additionally, the Forest Service reported that of the visits to the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, only 13 percent of visits were to the wilderness—even though the area is only one hour away from half the population in Washington State.

Finally, HR 886 would remove 14 percent of the lands identified for timber harvest (known as “matrix” lands) in the proposed 106,000 acres and designate them as wilderness. These land allocations were negotiated in good-faith and should be maintained. Such a change would require an amendment to the forest plan and would also reduce the annual allowable cut.

We would like to commend Rep. Larsen for only proposing wilderness in his district and for transparency and community involvement he has shown during this process. However, we cannot support HR 886 with the inclusion of thousands of acres that are not suitable for wilderness designation.

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