

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2206

To release certain wilderness study areas in the State of Montana.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 7, 2017

Mr. DAINES introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred
to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

A BILL

To release certain wilderness study areas in the State of
Montana.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Protect Public Use
5 of Public Lands Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. RELEASE OF CERTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS**

7 **IN THE STATE OF MONTANA.**

8 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

9 (1) under the Montana Wilderness Study Act of
10 1977 (Public Law 95–150; 91 Stat. 1243), 9 wilder-
11 ness study areas comprising a total of 973,000 acres

1 of land in the State of Montana were set aside for
2 the Secretary of Agriculture to evaluate the suit-
3 ability of the wilderness study areas for designation
4 as wilderness in accordance with the Wilderness Act
5 (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.), with the evaluation to be
6 completed not later than 5 years after the date of
7 enactment of the Montana Wilderness Study Act of
8 1977 (Public Law 95–150; 91 Stat. 1243);

9 (2) between 1979 and 1986, the Chief of the
10 Forest Service completed the studies of the 9 wilder-
11 ness study areas and determined that 608,700 acres
12 of the original 973,000 acres designated as wilder-
13 ness study areas by the Montana Wilderness Study
14 Act of 1977 (Public Law 95–150; 91 Stat. 1243)
15 were unsuitable for inclusion in the National Wilder-
16 ness Preservation System;

17 (3) since the completion of the studies required
18 under the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977
19 (Public Law 95–150; 91 Stat. 1243), of the land
20 designated as wilderness study areas by that Act—

21 (A) 171,000 acres have been designated as
22 wilderness by Congress; and

23 (B) 663,000 acres remain as wilderness
24 study areas until Congress acts;

1 (4) Congress has failed to act on the rec-
2 ommendations of the Chief of the Forest Service
3 with respect to the remaining 7 wilderness study
4 areas;

5 (5) the Montana State legislature passed House
6 Joint Resolution 9, a resolution asking Congress to
7 address the remaining 7 wilderness study areas;

8 (6) County commissions, sportsmen, farmers
9 and ranchers, and outdoor recreation groups in the
10 State of Montana support Congress acting to remove
11 the land in the State described in subsection (c) to
12 protect public use of public land; and

13 (7) for the purposes of section 3(a) of the Mon-
14 tana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 (Public Law 95–
15 150; 91 Stat. 1244), the land in the State of Mon-
16 tana described in subsection (c) has been adequately
17 studied for wilderness designation.

18 (b) RELEASE.—The land described in subsection (c)
19 is no longer subject to section 3(a) of the Montana Wilder-
20 ness Study Act of 1977 (Public Law 95–150; 91 Stat.
21 1244).

22 (c) DESCRIPTION OF LAND.—The land referred to in
23 paragraphs (6) and (7) of subsection (a) and subsection
24 (b) is—

1 (1) the approximately 151,000 acres of land
2 comprising the West Pioneer Wilderness Study Area;

3 (2) the approximately 32,500 acres of land
4 within the Blue Joint Wilderness Study Area not
5 recommended for wilderness classification in the
6 record of decision prepared by the Forest Service en-
7 titled “Bitterroot National Forest Plan” and dated
8 September 1987;

9 (3) the approximately 94,000 acres of land
10 comprising the Sapphire Wilderness Study Area;

11 (4) the approximately 81,000 acres of land
12 comprising the Middle Fork Judith Wilderness
13 Study Area; and

14 (5) the approximately 91,000 acres of land
15 comprising the Big Snowies Wilderness Study Area.

○