



October 29, 2021

To: fortherecord@energy.senate.gov

Subject line: Testimony in support of S. 1589, The Oregon Recreation Enhancement Act

The Honorable Joe Manchin
Chairman
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
United States Senate
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso
Ranking Member
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
United States Senate
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Manchin and Ranking Member Barrasso,

On behalf of the more than 40,000 members and supporters of river conservation, fishing organizations and businesses, we thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of S. 1589, the Oregon Recreation Enhancement Act. This legislation would benefit specific wild places and rivers of Oregon by:

- Designating 94,700 acres of public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management as the Rogue Canyon Recreation Area;
- Establishing a 30,000-acre recreation area on the Molalla River;
- Adding 56,000 acres of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management to the existing Wild Rogue Wilderness; and
- Protecting 100,000 acres of public lands managed by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, in the headwaters of the Smith and Illinois Rivers and Hunter Creek, from proposed strip mining.

There is broad support for the proposed protections under this bill, which have been under consideration by the Senate in various iterations for multiple years. Between 2010

and 2017, an estimated 70,000 people wrote letters in support of these protections. This legislation is supported by many local businesses and organizations who have seen the direct and indirect benefits of protecting public lands and wild rivers.

Benefits of Expanding the Wild Rogue Wilderness

We support improving protections for the Wild and Scenic Rogue River by expanding the Wild Rogue Wilderness to include adjacent lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The 84-mile Wild and Scenic stretch of the Rogue River from its confluence with the Applegate River downstream to the Lobster Creek bridge was one of the eight original rivers designated under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 1968.

Protecting the wild Rogue provides multiple benefits to southern Oregon communities and across the state. The Rogue River provides habitat for salmon and steelhead, supporting both the commercial and recreational fishing economies. Communities across the West Coast enjoy more than \$1.5 billion in economic benefit from all salmon and steelhead runs on the Rogue River.^[1] Annually, the value of commercial fishing of Rogue River salmon is estimated at \$1.4 million and at \$16 million for sportfishing.^[2] Threats to endangered salmon from harmful land use practices not only put the health of the river at risk, but can reduce the economic benefits of salmon and steelhead in the Rogue for local communities.

The Wild Rogue is internationally recognized for its recreation opportunities, from fishing to whitewater boating to hiking. In 2009, river-based recreation on the Wild Rogue River, including but not limited to rafting, hiking, and fishing, accounted for an estimated \$30 million in economic output and supports 445 full- and part-time jobs.^[3] Ninety-one percent of outfitters on the Rogue are based in Oregon. Opportunities to recreate on the river increase the number of visitors and boost the regional economy. For example, three out of every four lodging guests in the area during the Wild Rogue permit season from May through October were visiting the Wild and Scenic Rogue River.^[4]

Benefits of Creating the Rogue Canyon and Molalla Recreation Areas

While the Rogue River was one of the original eight Wild and Scenic Rivers designated by Congress in the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and a portion of the Molalla River was established as a wild and scenic river in 2019, only a small strip of land along the rivers are currently protected. This leaves open the rest of the watershed and wild canyons for possible harm and threatens the long-term viability of the thriving recreation economy that is built around the Rogue and Molalla rivers.

Often called the Zane Grey roadless area after the famed adventure novelist who wrote about the area, this is the largest roadless area managed by the Bureau of Land Management in Western Oregon. Extending wilderness status to the Zane Grey Roadless Area is important to preserving the values of the Wild Rogue.

The Molalla River (found to the southeast of Portland) provides clean drinking water to tens of thousands of Oregonians in the communities of Molalla and Canby. Recreation Area designation for the area surrounding the river could help bolster the local economy, protect clean drinking water, and ensure long term access to the recreation on the river and adjacent public lands.

The Oregon Recreation Enhancement Act would establish a 98,000-acre Recreation Area in the portion of the Rogue River watershed in Southwestern Oregon that is adjacent to the existing Wild Rogue Wilderness Area.

Legislation for the Molalla and Rogue Recreation Areas is similar to the language included in the previously introduced versions of the Oregon Wildlands Act. The bill also ensures that restoration work will continue in the proposed recreation area. Creation of these recreation areas will put the management emphasis where it needs to be – on preserving and expanding recreation for the benefit of local communities and all Americans, protecting fish and wildlife, carbon storage, and clean drinking water. Given the significance of the Rogue River canyon and its popularity and national reputation, we would like to encourage the addition of the word “National” to the official name of the Rogue Canyon *National* Recreation Area and Molalla River *National* Recreation Area. If done, these would be the first NRAs on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

Benefits of Protecting the Headwaters of the Illinois, Smith, and Pistol Rivers and Hunter Creek from Strip Mines

S. 1589 includes the Southwestern Oregon Mineral Withdrawal which would permanently prevent mining on more than 100,000 acres of U.S. Forest Service and BLM land in the headwaters of the Illinois, Smith, and Pistol Rivers, as well as Hunter Creek on the Oregon Coast. These lands are threatened by a proposal for a nickel strip mine by a foreign based investment firm. The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have finalized a 20-year mineral withdrawal for this area and securing passage of this bill would make those protections against mining permanent. Through the National Environmental Policy Act public comment process, tens of thousands of people submitted comments in favor of the mineral withdrawal. Support included local

elected leaders in Curry and Josephine Counties, local businesses, and downstream communities that derive their drinking water from these public lands.

These rivers are unique to the world and deserving of protection. We urge the Senate to listen to local communities and protect these special rivers from the threat of mining by passing this much needed legislation.

We the undersigned support S. 1589 and encourage the swift passage of legislation to protect the nationally outstanding rivers of Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of S. 1589, the Oregon Recreation Enhancement Act.

Sincerely,

S/ Michael Dotson
Executive Director
Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center
Ashland, OR

Endorsed by:

Oregon Recreation Act Supporters in Southwest Oregon

Tribal

Takilma, Nadine Baker Pilgrim
Cultural Ecological Enhancement Network, Tim Leyba and Suzanne Vautier

Public Sector

Illinois Valley Chamber of Commerce

Organizations

Beyond Toxics
Cascadia Wildlands
IV Stream Team, Cave Junction, Or.
Klamath Forest Alliance
Native Fish Society
Oregon Wild
Pollinator Project Rogue Valley
Rogue Riverkeeper
Rogue Valley Great Old Broads For Wilderness Group
Siskiyou Chapter, Native Plant Society of Oregon
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council
Southern Oregon University Outdoor Program, Ashland Or.

Western Environmental Law Center

Local Businesses

Acupuncture and Herb Clinic, Raven Sara L.AC, Grants Pass, Or.
Anderson Custom Rods, Rogue River, Or.
Anyone's Guess Creative Productions, Kerby, Or.
Arch Rock Brewing, Gold Beach, Or.
Art Bop Beer Co., Talent, Or.
ARTA River Trips, Grants Pass, Or.
Ashland Fly Shop, Ashland, Or.
Ashland Food Coop, Ashland, Or.
Ashland Mountain Provisions, Ashland, Or.
Bestow, Ashland, Or.
Big Rock Sports, Grants Pass, Or.
Biodiversity Arts LLC, Ashland, Or.
Blissful Being Wellness, Grants Pass, Or.
Briggs Guide Service, Grants Pass, Or.
Cabin Chemistry, Cave Junction, Or.
Clear Creek Family Practice, Selma, Or.
Clyde's Corner, Phoenix, Or.
Conner Fields Brewing, Applegate, Or.
Dan the BackHoe Man Excavation, Williams, Or.
Diggin' Livin' Natural Foods Farm, Cave Junction, Or.
Big Rock Sports, Grants Pass, Or.
Rogue Law Firm, Grants Pass, Or.
Fly Water Travel, Grants Pass, Or.
Grassroots Sound, Ashland, Or.
Green Springs Inn & Cabins, Ashland, Or.
Harvey Young Fishing, Medford, Or.
Humble Heron Fly Fishing, Grants Pass, Or.
Indigo Creek Outfitters, Ashland, Or.
KXCJ Radio, Cave Junction, Or.
Larch Company, Ashland, Or. and Washington, D.C.
Mary Reynolds Insurance, Cave Junction, Or.
Matt Will Photography, Ashland, Or.
Momentum River Expeditions, Ashland Or.
Montage Oriental Medicine, Grants Pass, Or.
Motel del Rogue, Grants Pass, Or.
Mountain Provisions, Ashland, Or.
Mountain Rose Herbs, Eugene, Or.
Noah's Rafting, Ashland, Or.
Northwest Rafting Company, Grants Pass, Or.
OARS Rogue River Rafting, Grants Pass, Or.
Orange Torpedo Trips, Merlin, Or.
Oregon Books & Games, Grants Pass, Or.
Oregon Solarworks, Central Point, Or.
Oshala Farm, Applegate, Or.
Pickled Planet, Ashland, Or.

REI Co-op, Medford, Or.
Rise Up! Artisan Bread, Jacksonville, Or.
Rogue Anglers Fly Shop, Medford, Or.
Rogue Climate, Medford, Or.,
Rogue Infinity Outfitters Grants Pass, Or.
Rogue Law Firm PC, Grants Pass, Or.
Rogue Roasters, Grants Pass, Or.
Rogue Rock Gym, Medford, Or.
Southern Oregon Mediation Center, Williams Or.
Sawyer Paddles and Oars LLC, Gold Hill, Or.
Sequoia Photography, Ashland, Or.
Simple Machine Winery, Talent, Or.
Siskiyou Alpaca, Cave Junction, Or.
Siskiyou Pines Development LLC, Medford, Or.
Siskiyou Seeds, Williams, Or.
SOTAR Inflatables rafts, Merlin, Or.
Sun Spirit Farms, Grants Pass, Or.
Sundance Kayak School, Merlin, Or.
Takubeh, Williams, Or.
The Haul, Grants Pass, Or.
Thistledown Orchards, Selma, Or.
Troon Vineyard, Grants Pass, Or.
True South Solar, Ashland, Or.
Warrick Vineyard, LLC, Grants Pass, Or.
We'moon, Eugene, Or.
Wellspring Aikido, Grants Pass, Or.
White Oak Farm, Williams, Or.
Wild Wines, Jacksonville, Or.
Wooldridge Creek Vineyard, Grants Pass, Or.

[1] Helvoigt, Ted L. and Diane Charlton, 2009, Economic Value of Rogue River Salmon, ECONorthwest, Available online at https://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/commission/binders/19/06_Jun/Beaver%20Petition%20Bibliography/Helvoigt%20and%20Charlton_2009.pdf

[2] Ibid., p. 11-14.

[3] Helvoigt, Ted L., et al., 2009, Regional Economic Impacts of Recreation on the Wild and Scenic Rogue River, Available online p. 1.

[4] Ibid., p. 1