



**MONTANA
FARM BUREAU
FEDERATION**

Senator Steve Daines
320 Hart Senate Office Building
120 Constitution Ave NE
Washington, DC 20002

November 6, 2017

Dear Senator Daines,

Public lands are a hot topic on the Federal level these days. Here in Montana we have many different types of public land and the members of the Montana Farm Bureau Federation continue to be interested in the management of these lands. Our members appreciate that there is a renewed focus on the management of federal lands, especially with regard to Wilderness Study Areas. MFBF supports the release of all Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) that have been designated as WSAs for more than five years but have failed to reach wilderness status.

As you know, there are around 40 Wilderness Study Areas in the state of Montana, many of which were designated as such more than forty years ago. Our members feel that five years is more than enough time for the agencies involved to properly "study" the validity of a wilderness designation. If Congress does not find that there is enough evidence supporting a full Wilderness designation after that period of time has elapsed, the land should be released from the "study" and returned to former management practices. Unfortunately, many WSAs have been under this designation for far longer than five years and as it currently stands, they are being managed very similarly to full-on Wilderness Areas, which inhibits the productivity of those lands, harming agriculture and other natural resource industries, as well as the small towns and communities that rely on those industries. Established wilderness criteria threaten multiple use areas by prohibiting the use of motorized tools and mechanized vehicles in watershed management, trail maintenance, noxious weed control, and fire protection, all of which are important to agriculture and have direct effects on adjoining land.

We appreciate you looking into this issue and considering agriculture's concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "HMcPherson".

Hans McPherson
President