



*Office of the Speaker*

**MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**AUSTIN KNUDSEN**  
SPEAKER

The Honorable Steve Daines  
U.S. Senator  
320 Hart Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Steve Daines,

We write to you today to request that you and the rest of the Montana delegation introduce legislation similar to House Joint Resolution 9 (HJ 9), which was widely supported, and passed into law, by the Montana State Legislature in April of 2017 during the 65th Montana Legislature.

HJ 9 urges Congress to enact legislation that releases “all wilderness study areas (WSAs) identified and specified in the Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977....unless Congress confirms a study area for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.” **In the interest of providing certainty to land management agencies and to ensure these public lands are maintained for the multiple benefits they provide the citizens of Montana, the Montana State Legislature widely supports releasing seven WSAs totaling 663,000 acres of National Forest System lands.** Alternatively, Congress should confirm such an area be formally designated as Wilderness or any other alternative designation in a timely fashion.

The WSAs referenced in HJ 9 represent only seven of 44 designated WSAs in Montana. The Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 required the Secretary of Agriculture to review specified lands within five years to determine if their suitability warranted inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System, yet Congress has failed to determine the fate of these public lands 40 years later. With Montana’s ownership and oversight split evenly between federal, state, and private, additional barriers due to an uncertain future designation only intensifies the complex challenges facing land managers. Congress can and should immediately address these barriers.

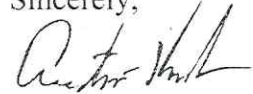
Additionally, HJ 9 states that Congress should “consider re-designating the WSAs as national recreation areas, national protection areas or national conservation areas” should traditional resource development, such as mineral development, timber harvest, or grazing be determined suitable for a particular landscape, making a certain level of protection appropriate. Such a determination simply should have been made in the last 40 years and it was not the intent of Congress to allow lands to sit in limbo without acting on a formal designation. Legislation signed into law that reflects the intent of HJ 9 will remove needless bureaucratic red tape on these lands. Moreover, future management plans resulting from a suitable determination will regulate permitted uses on the landscape as required by current law.

The Montana Legislature recognizes the different uses of our public lands. From resource production to motorized and non-motorized recreation to clean water and wildlife habitat, Montana’s public lands provide multiple benefits to the diverse communities they serve.

Ensuring lands that are currently in WSA designation unnecessarily are removed, agencies will engage with the public in determining the future management of these areas, providing more opportunities for diverse use and the many benefits that Montanans expect from their public lands.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and we sincerely hope you will follow the bipartisan actions of the Montana State Legislature and support the conditional release of the Wilderness Study Areas on National Forest System land in Montana.

Sincerely,



Speaker Austin Knudsen

Supporting Members of the Montana House of Representatives:

Rep. Fred Anderson	Rep. Nancy Ballance	Rep. Dan Bartel
Rep. Becky Beard	Rep. Seth Berglee	Rep. Randy Brodehl
Rep. Bob Brown	Rep. Tom Burnett	Rep. Rob Cook
Rep. Mike Cuffe	Rep. Geraldine Custer	Rep. Alan Doane
Rep. Ron Ehli	Rep. Jeff Essmann	Rep. Ross Fitzgerald
Rep. Kelly Flynn	Rep. Wylie Galt	Rep. Frank Garner
Rep. Carl Glimm	Rep. Edward Greef	Rep. Bruce Grubbs
Rep. Steve Gunderson	Rep. Bradley Hamlett	Rep. Bill Harris
Rep. Greg Hertz	Rep. Adam Hertz	Rep. Kenneth Holmlund
Rep. Donald Jones	Rep. Jon Knokey	Rep. Casey Knudsen
Rep. Steve Lavin	Rep. Dennis Lenz	Rep. Denley Loge
Rep. Forrest Mandeville	Rep. Theresa Manzella	Rep. Wendy McKamey
Rep. Dale Mortensen	Rep. Mark Noland	Rep. James O'Hara
Rep. Jimmy Patelis	Rep. Gordon Pierson	Rep. Alan Redfield
Rep. Matt Regier	Rep. Vince Ricci	Rep. Adam Rosendale
Rep. Walt Sales	Rep. Ray Shaw	Rep. Lola Sheldon-Galloway
Rep. Derek Skees	Rep. Scott Staffanson	Rep. Jeremy Trebas
Rep. Brad Tschida	Rep. Barry Usher	Rep. Sue Vinton
Rep. Kirk Wagoner	Rep. Peggy Webb	Rep. Tom Welch
Rep. Kerry White	Rep. Daniel Zolnikov	

Supporting members of the Montana Senate:

Sen. Duane Ankney	Sen. Mark Blasdel	Sen. Dee Brown
Sen. Edward Buttrey	Sen. Pat Connell	Sen. Jennifer Fielder
Sen. Steve Fitzpatrick	Sen. Terry Gauthier	Sen. Steve Hinebauch
Sen. Jedediah Hinkle	Sen. Brian Hoven	Sen. David Howard
Sen. Llew Jones	Sen. Doug Kary	Sen. Bob Keenan
Sen. Mike Lang	Sen. Eric Moore	Sen. Albert Olszewski
Sen. Ryan Osmundson	Sen. Keith Regier	Sen. Tom Richmond
Sen. Scott Sales	Sen. Daniel Salomon	Sen. Jason Small
Sen. Cary Smith	Sen. Nels Swandal	Sen. Gordon Vance
Sen. Chas Vincent	Sen. Gene Vuckovich	Sen. Roger Webb
Sen. Jeffery Welborn		