



October 26, 2011

P.O. Box 1065
Charlottesville, VA 22902
(434) 971-1553
www.wildvirginia.org

Representative Robert Hurt
1516 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Wilderness and Roadless Area Release Act of 2011 - H.R. 1581

Dear Representative Hurt,

Wild Virginia is a non-profit organization that has long been dedicated to protecting the remaining wild forest ecosystems in Virginia's national forests. We work to ensure that the ecological integrity and biological diversity of these public lands are protected for future generations. Most of our efforts in recent years have centered on the George Washington National Forest. Through education and outreach, we inform and mobilize citizens about issues, threats, and opportunities for the forest.

Board of Directors:

Chris Bowlen

Eric Gilchrist

Jennifer Johnson

Ernie Reed

Kristin Taverna

Nathan VanHooser

We are contacting you about the Wilderness and Roadless Area Release Act of 2011 (H.R. 1581). We are very concerned about this potential legislation as we do not believe it is an appropriate approach to managing our valuable natural resources. We want to express our strong opposition to the legislation.

The bill would remove important conservation protections from over 60 million acres of public land nationally and allow industrial activities such as mining, logging, and drilling. Some of the most pristine parts of the Jefferson and George Washington National Forests in Virginia would be affected by this legislation. In the George Washington alone, roughly 242,000 acres of Inventoried Roadless Areas would lose their protection. About one fourth of these 242,000 acres are in watersheds that provide drinking water to local communities. We believe the current protective measures for these lands must remain in place and request that you oppose the Wilderness and Roadless Area Release Act.

H.R. 1581 is misguided in its approach to management issues on our nation's shared public lands. It removes provisions of law that protect tens of millions of acres of roadless and wilderness-quality national forest lands and public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Enactment of the legislation would tip the management of our public lands out of balance and destroy pristine wild lands that, once lost, are gone for many generations, if not forever.


By eliminating these protections and opening up these lands to development, H.R. 1581 would harm and destroy some of our national heritage and deny future Americans the opportunity to enjoy these pristine lands. The landscapes that would

be affected by H.R. 1581 provide a myriad of benefits to local communities: clean air, clean water, habitat for wildlife, outstanding recreation, and the opportunities for healthy, vibrant economies.

H.R. 1581 is an unwise approach to managing our public lands, removing control at the local level from people working together to solve land use issues. We ask you to support the continued protection of our tremendous natural heritage, over 60 million acres of roadless and wilderness quality natural areas, by opposing the Wilderness and Roadless Area Release Act. This will help ensure that our natural heritage will continue to be enjoyed for many generations to come.

Thank you very much for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Hannah".

David Hannah
Conservation Director
Wild Virginia

CC: Senator Mark Warner
Senator Jim Webb