
SPORTSMEN AND THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

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It's no secret to the historian that sportsmen and women have long had a role in public lands policy. Certainly, the public lands legacy that has been left to us in this country is a legacy of sportsmen before us; Roosevelt was a hunter, Pinchot was a fisherman. But in recent years, sportsmen have again stepped into the lead, particularly on public lands issues that challenge our society to balance our growing country and our need to have places to get away, places of retreat. Trout Unlimited has been instrumental in guiding and driving much of the good public lands decisions that have been made in the recent past. In particular, the Wyoming Range Legacy Act, sponsored by Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyoming, is case in point. Located just south of Jackson, Wyoming, and running ~ 125 mi north-south to near the town of Kemmerer, the range is home to three subspecies of cutthroat trout including the Colorado River, the Snake River and the Bonneville. The Bridger-Teton National Forest cloaks some 1.2 million ac of the range. A group led by TU called Sportsmen for the Wyoming Range pushed for withdrawal legislation; legislation that would allow one use of the public's land—mineral extraction—to be taken off the table. Whereas some of the range was previously leased for oil and gas exploration, much of the range was not. The Act did two things: it provided for no new leasing on unleased land, and it allowed for private buy-out of existing leases while not preventing drilling of valid existing leases. The Act passed as part of the Omnibus Public Lands bill that was signed by the President in March 2009. Today, some 1.2 million ac of public land will never see a drill rig whereas ~ 60-70,000 ac is targeted for buy-out or light development. Senator Jon Tester, D-Montana, introduced a bill last summer that TU is very supportive of and has some similarities to the Wyoming Range Legacy Act. The Forest Jobs and Recreation Act seeks to mandate logging on 100,000 ac of federal USDA Forest Service land, create some 670,000 ac of designated big 'W' wilderness, and 330,000 some ac of motorized recreation area. For TU, the bill fits our mission perfectly: Protect, Reconnect, Restore and Sustain. Protect: Wilderness and recreation designation

would set aside the headwaters of some of Montana's most fabled trout streams. Reconnect: Stewardship logging would pay for much-needed culvert removal for fish passage. Restore: Stewardship logging would pay for road removal or realignment where interfering with fisheries habitat. Sustain: The Act would maintain Montana lifestyles for those who like to fish and do other activities outside. TU is fully supportive of the bill for not only the mission fit, but also because of its grassroots nature, its collaborative process, its bipartisan nature, and its Montana-based common-sense solution.