

April 26, 2017

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**Reps. Maloney, Grijalva and Sen. Whitehouse Introduce Legislation to
Protect Pristine Northern Rockies Ecosystem**

WASHINGTON – To protect a major pristine ecosystem in the Northern Rockies that is currently under threat from logging and other industrial activities, Representative Carolyn B. Maloney (NY-12) and House Committee on Natural Resources Ranking Member Raúl Grijalva (AZ-3), along with Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), introduced the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act (NREPA) today in both the House and Senate. The bill would designate 23 million acres of America’s premiere road-less lands in five states; Idaho, Wyoming, Montana, Oregon and Washington, as permanent wilderness. It would also designate nearly 1,800 miles of rivers and streams as wild and scenic rivers.

For the first time, NREPA has been introduced with companion legislation in the Senate.

“The Northern Rockies are a rich ecosystem and a national treasure. They are worthy of our country’s highest protective status for wildlands,” said Congresswoman Maloney. “This land should be designated as permanent wilderness. NREPA will protect natural biological

corridors and connect whole ecosystems. It would save taxpayers money by eliminating wasteful subsidies to the logging industry, and create thousands of new jobs, restoring over 1 million acres of damaged habitat and watershed.”

“The Northern Rockies are one of the world’s great natural wonders, and they need long-term preservation now more than ever,” said Ranking Member Grijalva. “As an environmental champion, Sen. Whitehouse understands the value of establishing these wilderness areas, and I’m proud to lead this effort with him and Rep. Maloney. Leaving these beautiful open spaces vulnerable to extraction and development would be an unforgivable mistake. This bill, as it has been for years, is the right way to protect them.”

“Our forests and rivers are key to our health and wellbeing. They are also engines of our economy,” said Sen. Whitehouse. “This bill would preserve these wild places for future generations and safeguard critical habitat for threatened species. I am glad to join Representatives Maloney and Grijalva in reintroducing it.”

Mike Garrity, Executive Director of the Alliance for the Wild Rockies said, “The Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act will create jobs by restoring old clearcuts, save taxpayers money by reducing subsidized logging, and protect habitat for native species by declaring as wilderness all of the roadless areas in the Northern Rockies.”

Grizzly bears, caribou, elk, bison, wolves, bull trout and salmon still thrive in the Northern Rockies. The bill seeks to safeguard both these species and the lands on which they live.

According to a 2003 study, NREPA would save taxpayers \$245 million over a ten-year period by managing the land as wilderness. Additionally, more than 2,300 jobs would be created in the region through NREPA's program to restore Northern Rockies habitats to their natural state.

The Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act:

Designates as wilderness more than 23 million acres of ecosystems and watersheds in the Northern Rockies;

Connects natural, biological corridors, ensuring the continued existence of native plants and animals and mitigating the effects of global warming;

Restores habitat that has been severely damaged from roads that were built, creating more than 2,300 jobs and leading to a more sustainable economic base in the region;

Keeps water available for ranchers and farmers downstream until it is most needed; and

Eliminates subsidized development in the designated wilderness areas, saving taxpayers \$245 million over a 10-year period.

The bill number in the House is H.R. 2135, S. 936 in the Senate.