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## **150 Conservation Groups Tell Congress: Keep Bikes Out of Wilderness**

### **GOP Bills are an assault on the very idea of Wilderness and the values of the Wilderness Act**

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A broad coalition of 150 conservation and Wilderness organizations from across America have asked Congress “to reject an unprecedented call to weaken the Wilderness Act to allow for the use of mountain bikes in designated Wilderness.”

The sign-on letter from the 150 organizations was prepared in response to two Republican bills (S. 2877 and H.R. 1349), which would open up all of America’s 110-million acres of Wilderness to mountain bikes and other wheeled contraptions within 2 years of passage. The Senate bill was just recently introduced in Congress.

“For over a half century, the Wilderness Act has protected wilderness areas from mechanization and mechanical transport, even if no motors were involved with such activities. This has meant, as Congress intended, that Wildernesses have been kept free from bicycles and other types of mechanization and mechanical transport. [We] believe that this protection has served our nation well, and that the ‘benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness’ would be forever lost by allowing mechanized transport in these areas,” the 150 organizations wrote Congress in the sign-on letter.

A copy of the letter to Congress signed by 150 conservation groups can be viewed here: <https://bit.ly/2xNcS6Z>

“We see this for what it is: an assault on the very idea of Wilderness and the values of the Wilderness Act,” said George Nickas, executive director of Wilderness Watch. “At a time when wilderness and wildlife are under increasing pressures from increasing populations, growing mechanization, and a rapidly changing climate, the last thing Wilderness needs is to be invaded by mountain bikes and other machines.”

Supporters of S. 2877 and H.R. 1349 erroneously claim that mountain bikes were allowed in Wilderness until 1984, but then banned administratively by the U.S. Forest Service. This claim is simply not true.

“The 1964 Wilderness Act (36 U.S.C. 1131-1136) banned all types of mechanized transport, including bicycles, in designated Wilderness. Section 4(c) of that act states, “[T]here shall be...no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of aircraft, *no other form of mechanical transport*, and no structure or installation within any such area.” (italics added)

“Mountain bikes are exactly the kind of mechanical devices and mechanical transport that Congress intended to keep out of Wilderness in passing the Wilderness Act. Bicycles have their place, but that place is not inside Wilderness areas,” explained Kevin Proescholdt, Conservation Director of Wilderness Watch. – END -