

Wyden, Smith introduce new Mount Hood Wilderness Act

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Bipartisan legislation protects nearly 129,000 additional acres, adds National Recreation Areas and almost 80 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers

Working for the permanent preservation of an additional 128,600 acres surrounding Mount Hood and the Columbia River Gorge, U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith on Thursday introduced the "Lewis and Clark Mount Hood Wilderness Act of 2007." The legislation builds on previous efforts to establish a Mount Hood wilderness area, incorporating comments from over 100 community groups and local governments, members of the Oregon Congressional delegation, the governor and the Bush administration.

The Senators' bill increases existing wilderness protections by almost 90 percent, granting Wild and Scenic River protections to an additional 79.6 miles of Oregon Rivers, while creating more than 34,000 acres of Mount Hood National Recreation Areas with improved access for mountain biking and other recreation opportunities.

"This is more than a bipartisan effort" this is a community effort involving thousands of Oregonians who care about the preservation of our most-cherished lands," Wyden said. "It has been more than two hundred years since Lewis and Clark first laid eyes on Mount Hood; today is an important step in preserving what they saw then for all future generations."

"Mount Hood is a place of magnificent beauty and a source of remarkable pride for Oregonians," Smith said. "With widespread support and tremendous effort on the part of many, we are working to protect and preserve it for future generations."

Most of the Senators' proposed wilderness areas are contiguous to existing wilderness areas and were selected to reduce potential conflicts with other recreational uses. These areas include: Hunchback Mountain, Clackamas Canyon, Memaloose Lake, Mirror Lake, Sand Canyon, Sandy Additions, Inch Creek, Lower White River, Larch Mountain, South Fork Clackamas, Twin Lakes, Barlow Butte, Bonney Butte, White River, Badger Creek Additions, Salmon River Meadows, Sisi Butte, Upper Big Bottom, Bull of the Woods, Richard L. Kohnstamm Memorial Area, Roaring River, Eagle Creek, Alder Creek, Alk Cover/Mazama, Big Bottom, Tilly Jane, Bull of the Woods and Gorge Face.

Among the rivers proposed for further protection are the picturesque waterfalls and glacial outwash of the East Fork of the Hood River and ancestral hunting and fishing ground of the Fish Creek. Over 17 miles of superb salmon and steelhead habitat on the Collowash River have also been proposed for protection. All told, the Senators are proposing a 47 percent increase to the Wild and Scenic Rivers network of Mount Hood. The additional miles of rivers to be protected include: East Fork Hood River, Middle Fork Hood River, Zig Zag River, Eagle Creek, Fifteen Mile Creek, South Fork Roaring River, South Fork Clackamas River, Collowash

River and Fish Creek.

The proposal would also create a network of Mount Hood National Recreation Areas that includes the Shellrock Mountain, the classic alpine aquamarine at Bolder Lake and the ponderosa pines of Fifteen Mile Creek. Oregon's newest National Recreation Areas provide permanent protections from commercial development, road-building and large-scale commercial logging. It also provides opportunities for mountain biking and other diverse recreational opportunities on 34,545 acres.

With the passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964, the United States became the world's first nation to define and designate wilderness areas through law. The Wilderness Act initially protected 9.1 million acres of U.S. national forest, while today wilderness areas amount to more than 105 million acres of the nation's most pristine national parks, wildlife refuges, and forests.

To view maps of the proposed "Lewis and Clark Mount Hood Wilderness Act of 2007" visit: <http://wyden.senate.gov/mthood/maps.html>.

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