

March 2nd, 2018

The Honorable Liz Cheney
U.S. House of Representatives
416 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Cheney,

We write to you today in firm opposition to your stated timeline to decide the fate of our highly valued Wyoming Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs).

As concerned citizens in multiple counties, we have a personal stake in the long-term management of these public lands. From county commissioner reports, it clearly sounds like your expedited timeline is driven by Representative Rob Bishop. We are deeply concerned that rushing to meet a Utah lawmaker's deadline will yield a poor legislative outcome, will not be in the best interest of Wyoming, and will sacrifice the long-term protection of the following public lands that we and so many other Wyomingites care intensely about. Many of us frequently visit these WSAs and we'd like to share with you some of the remarkable qualities of these places.

Fremont County has five WSAs entirely within the county, including Larkin Dome, Sweetwater Canyon, Copper Mountain, Dubois Badlands, and Whiskey Mountain. These are well-loved and well-traveled landscapes used by hunters, climbers, hikers, horse packers, rock hounds, photographers, and others that seek solace in the desert. The primitive climbing experience at Larkin Dome is unlike any other in nearby regions and attracts out-of-state climbers who benefit Lander's economy. The maze-like Honeycomb Buttes, shared with Sweetwater County, are mesmerizing and prized by artists and people whose faith is rejuvenated in nature.

In Sweetwater County, there are 13 wilderness study areas including the beloved Adobe Town, the Buffalo Hump sand dunes, and the rugged Devil's Playground, among many others. Just like Wyoming and its citizens, these public lands are wild, untamed, and free. The awe-inspiring Oregon Buttes were important landmarks for travelers for millennia, from native peoples to the Mormon pioneers. Today, hunters prize the rare Red Desert elk herd, who rely on the open spaces and hideouts provided by the nine wilderness study areas in the Northern Red Desert.

In Natrona County, the rocky enclaves of Miller Springs, Split Rock, and Savage Peak WSAs offer adventure and reminders of our history. Few places in the county provide citizens the opportunity to "get away" as much as these areas. These WSAs are also adjacent to the Oregon-California-Mormon National Historic Trails. Today, visitors continue to learn about the hardships of our 19th century westward migration at several sites alongside these WSAs and throughout the Sweetwater River Valley.

Park County's High Lakes and McCullough Peaks WSAs offer unparalleled backcountry recreation and natural beauty. The Peaks draw in hikers, horseback riders, photographers, and others, and are home to a successful public-private partnership for managing wild horse herds.

Each of these WSAs, and the many others we haven't mentioned, are beloved by locals and by Wyoming citizens who travel across the state to visit them. Because of that, we deserve a say in their future management.

Representative Cheney, no one is suggesting the current status quo is working for these WSAs which is why Wyoming citizens have spent months working to reach common ground at the local level. Unfortunately, your legislative timeline and the questionable influence of a Utah lawmaker, would only produce a legislative product that shirks public participation, lacks public support, and does a disservice to public lands.

There are WSAs today that deserve protection every bit as much as the Gros Ventre, Jedediah Smith, and Cloud Peak wilderness areas did thirty years ago when your father helped pass the 1984 Wyoming Wilderness Act. Choosing the right places to protect and to release for other management is a careful balancing act that takes time and personal involvement. Your father understood this and helped pass a carefully negotiated compromise through Congress. In so doing he created a public lands legacy.

What will your legacy be? Will you continue to push a timeline that serves the needs of an out-of-state Congressman and limits public involvement? Or will you give Wyoming's citizens the time we need to reach common ground and develop ground-up proposals the full Wyoming delegation can champion?

Only one of these choices will truly honor the great state of Wyoming, our magnificent public lands, and the people who use and cherish them. Only one of these choices will have the necessary public support to be signed into law.

Sincerely,

Era Aranow, Lander

Libby Vedder, Lander

Rich Brame, Lander

Cyndy and Peter Simer, Lander

Sam Lightner, Jr., Lander

Tom Rea, Casper

Karen Snyder, Casper

Rev. Dr. Bernadine Craft, Rock Springs

Mike Burd, Green River

Marshall Dominick, Cody

Ken and Kathy Lichtendahl, Clark

Rev. Warren Murphy, Cody

Don Crecelius, Sheridan

Earl DeGroot, Cheyenne

Cc: Senator John Barrasso
Senator Mike Enzi
Governor Matt Mead
Wyoming County Commissioners Association