

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Monday, April 13, 2009**

**Contact:**

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**Northwest Montana Conservationist Call for Wilderness**

*Tell the Delegation that Citizens Are Ready for Wilderness Legislation*

**Kalispell, MT.** Citizens from across northwest Montana and from all walks of life sent the Montana Congressional delegation a one-page letter last Friday saying that valuable wildlands need wilderness protection.

All long-time residents of northwest Montana, these citizens sent the attached letter to Sens. Max Baucus and Jon Tester and Rep. Denny Rehberg last Friday. It contains the signatures of 23 northwest Montanans including former state senators, building contractors, attorneys, scientists, conservation professionals, doctors, and others. The letter follows a previous letter that was sent to the delegation on March 5 that was signed by 14 prominent Montanans from across the state. The current letter asks the delegation to complete Montana's unfinished wilderness work.

"We as signatories to this letter express to our delegation that Montanans want them to protect more of Montana's wilderness heritage for our children and grandchildren," said Edwin Fields, a building contractor in Whitefish, and one of the signatories.

"Times have changed. All of us agree that protecting Montana's last wild places as wilderness is good for business in the state, and a priceless legacy for our children. After 26 years, now is the time to act," Fields said.

Fields was referring to the last 26 years over which time Montana has not seen wilderness legislation. Other western states recently saw new wilderness areas established in the 2009 Omnibus Public Lands bill recently signed by President Obama. Montana was not included in that landmark legislation.

"Many people think their favorite wild public lands are protected; but they're not," said Carol Blake, a Eureka-based realtor.

"In Northwest Montana we have many irreplaceable wildlands that are every bit as deserving of wilderness protection as the Bob Marshall or Selway Bitterroot Wilderness areas," Blake said. "In fact, many of these lands are used more on a day to day basis by local people than the Bob, which means they're incredibly valuable to local communities."

Former state senator, George Darrow best expressed the optimism of the times and present wilderness effort. He said, "Wilderness is a priceless economic and cultural asset, and one that the Montana delegation can take to the bank. No other form of land management best protects our clean water, our wildlife, or provides as many benefits to local communities. Now is the time to act."

**END**

April 10, 2009

Honorable Senator Max Baucus  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator Jon Tester  
204 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Rep. Denny Rehberg  
516 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Baucus, Senator Tester, and Representative Rehberg:

On March 5, 2009, you received a letter from 14 distinguished Montanans requesting that you take action to establish new wilderness areas across Montana in order to protect our national heritage of Wilderness for future generations. We write you today in full support of that previous letter, its authors and the Montana wildlands they spoke for so clearly.

As co-signers of this letter we wish to speak with one voice in support of wildlands as yet unprotected that extend across northwest Montana. These include the Scotchman Peaks, the Great Burn, Cube Iron, La Beau, the Swan Crest and Swan Front, Ten Lakes, Whitefish Range, and additions to the Cabinet Mountain and Mission Mountain wildernesses. We also recognize that many other wildlands across Montana not mentioned here deserve wilderness protections.

Montana's Congressional delegation last passed wilderness legislation for Montana 26 years ago in 1983. Since that time, the remaining roadless public lands in the state that deserve wilderness protection have been variously protected, degraded or lost altogether. Montanans have consistently favored protection of roadless lands (as comments on the Roadless Rule so clearly show) and what better time to legislate these areas as Wilderness than now?

Establishing new wilderness areas under the National Wilderness Preservation System requires vision, decisive action and a willingness to recognize the inherent value of land in its natural state. It also requires that we, as the present stewards of the land, pass to future generations the ability to enjoy the 'American Heritage of Wilderness'. We ask that you support this – our vision – of wilderness.

Inevitably, the value of our wildlands grows more priceless – like any resource in short supply – with each passing year. We believe in a bright and prosperous future. We firmly believe that Montana's economic and cultural future requires that we protect our remaining wildlands.

Please commit yourself to finishing the business of protecting Montana's wilderness heritage.

Respectfully,

Edwin Fields  
Building Contractor, Whitefish

Dr. Loren Kreck  
Retired Dentist, Columbia Falls

George Darrow  
Former State Senator, Bigfork

Doug Ferrell  
Building Contractor, Trout Creek

Prof. Lex Blood  
Educator and Geologist, Kalispell

Mark L. Sheets  
City Councilman, Thompson Falls

Tom Esch  
Attorney, Kalispell

Wendy Ninteman  
Conservation Executive, Missoula

Tom Giles  
Developer, Lindbergh Lake

Elaine Snyder  
Buckskin Clothier, Kalispell

Steven W. Running  
Regents Professor of Ecology, Univ. Montana

Prof. Jack Stanford  
Flathead Lake Biological Station, Yellow Bay

Dana Christensen  
Attorney, Kalispell

Dr. Ron Miller  
MD, Whitefish

Mike McGrew  
Millworker, Condon

Dan Weinberg  
Former MT State Senator, Whitefish

Carol Blake  
Realtor, Eureka

Kris Kindberg  
Medical Transcriptionist, Eureka

Greg Tollefson  
Free Lance Writer, Missoula

Rev. Bradley Wirth  
Episcopal Minister, Bigfork

John Phelps  
Attorney, Whitefish

Peter Leander  
Attorney, Bigfork

Terri N. Trieweiler  
Attorney, Whitefish