

Wilderness implications ...

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In a speech before the Nome Chamber of Commerce in July, RDC Education Foundation president Joe Henri said federal land management trends should be reversed. He suggested that some lands should be restored to multiple use, opening selected areas to sensible exploration, development, access and transportation creation.

"Sadly, the spirit of compromise has put way too much of this vast subcontinent off limits, out or reach ...," Henri said. "We must roll back these massive land set asides and restore wider opportunity to this great land," Henri added.

The tremendous acreage of withdrawals might well "embrace a preponderance of the more valuable resources needed by Alaska to develop flourishing industries with which to support itself and its people," Henri said.

Henri and RDC are not alone in opposing new wilderness withdrawals. At the Las Vegas wilderness conference, associations representing almost 10 million people

agreed to a common direction on government policy affecting land use, especially federal Wilderness designations. Attendees at the conference formed a steering committee to direct an emerging alliance comprised of a broad spectrum of land use concerns. The group laid a solid foundation of cooperation, opening the door to a unified front in the advocacy and promotion of wise land use.

The diverse group, representing all industry sectors, including sportsmen, agreed to join forces to stop a juggernaut of environmental extremism that some believe is slowly strangling America.

"Grazing doesn't always go with timber, timber doesn't always go with mining, mining doesn't always go with recreation, but you've got to put petty arguments aside and realize that we'll be all history if we don't cooperate," said Charles Cushman of the National Inholders Association.

Western Timber Association vice president Roberta Anderson told conference attendees that "we are fed up with being

cast as the bad guys because we produce products from earth resources or recreate on public land."

Since nearly all wilderness designations in the past decade have been made without any consideration of the cumulative, social and economic impacts created by such withdrawals, there is a need to stop and reflect upon the costs of federal Wilderness and a multitude of similar state designations before any further substantial additions are made to the wilderness system. The time has come to consider the scope of the hidden social and economic costs of wilderness designations.

Editor's Note: This summer RDC has submitted detailed comments to the National Park Service on its wilderness review proposals for 13 federal conservation units in Alaska. We thank to those who helped, especially Mary Jane Sutliff, Paul Glavinovich, Chuck Herbert and Mike Abbott. Assistance was also provided through Jim Burling of the Pacific Legal Foundation.

The Tongass National Forest

The cost of Wilderness

One of the biggest myths circulating these days is that of a heavily subsidized timber industry in the Tongass National Forest.

The Tongass Timber Supply Fund was created in 1980 with the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), which designated 5.4 million acres of the national forest as federal Wilderness. The annual timber appropriation of \$40 million was made to help offset the effect of closing prime timber stands in the newly-created wilderness.

To maintain the timber supply to dependent communities, more intensive and expensive forest management was needed by the Forest Service to prepare smaller and more remote timber stands outside wilderness areas. The annual funding, loggers contend, **is the cost of Wilderness**. The level of funding wouldn't be necessary had the 5.4 million acres remained in multiple use. As a result, industry argues that much of the timber fund is actually a subsidy to those who use wilderness areas, even if just for viewing from a boat. It is a social cost for a (disputable) social benefit of additional wilderness.

Of the 16.7 million acres comprising the Tongass, only 1.7 million acres are open

to timber production as one of several multiple uses. Although open to timber production, this small portion of the national forest is strictly regulated with many areas preserved for the viewing pleasure of boaters, kayakers; and ferry and cruise ship passengers.

Over the next 100 years only ten percent of the Tongass is scheduled to be harvested. In any given year, only a small fraction of that total will be logged.

The Tongass timber harvest supports 20 percent of the Southeast Alaska economy, accounting for 9,000 direct and indirect year-round jobs.

Tongass Facts

- The Tongass National Forest is the largest national forest in the United States at 16.7 million acres.
- Over 80 percent of Southeast Alaska is included in the boundaries of the Tongass National Forest.
- Modern forest management practices will allow a harvesting cycle to continue for hundreds of years without touching 90% of the forest.
- Congress made sure Alaska got its share of Wilderness. Alaska provides 62 percent of this nation's Wilderness or 56 million acres of Wilderness. The Ton-

gass has 5.4 million acres of Wilderness.

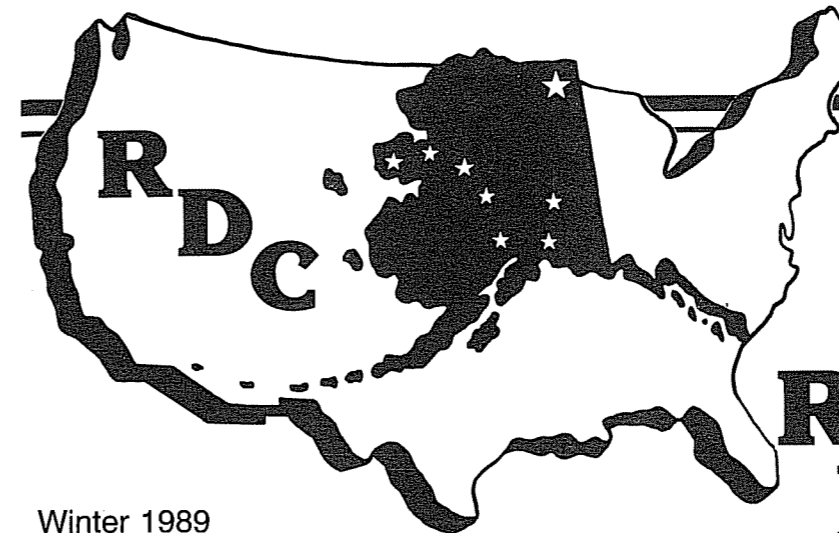
- Salmon harvests have climbed rapidly since 1972 when the catch was 22 million fish. In 1986, 128 million fish were caught. That's an indication that logging and fish are compatible.
- In addition to providing a stable economic base for people who enjoy and respect the outdoors, the Tongass timber industry provides roads which open up fishing and recreational areas for residents and visitors.
- Deer harvests have gone up too. In fact, the amount of deer harvested in Southeast Alaska has more than tripled in just five years from 4,800 in 1980 to 15,100 in 1985.
- An acre of second-growth forest, that has been thinned, actually produces twice the volume of timber as an old-growth stand. The second-growth timber also has a value two to three times as high as timber from an old-growth forest.
- Programs ranging from recreational enhancement and wildlife studies to public information and fish ladder construction are funded through timber harvest appropriations.

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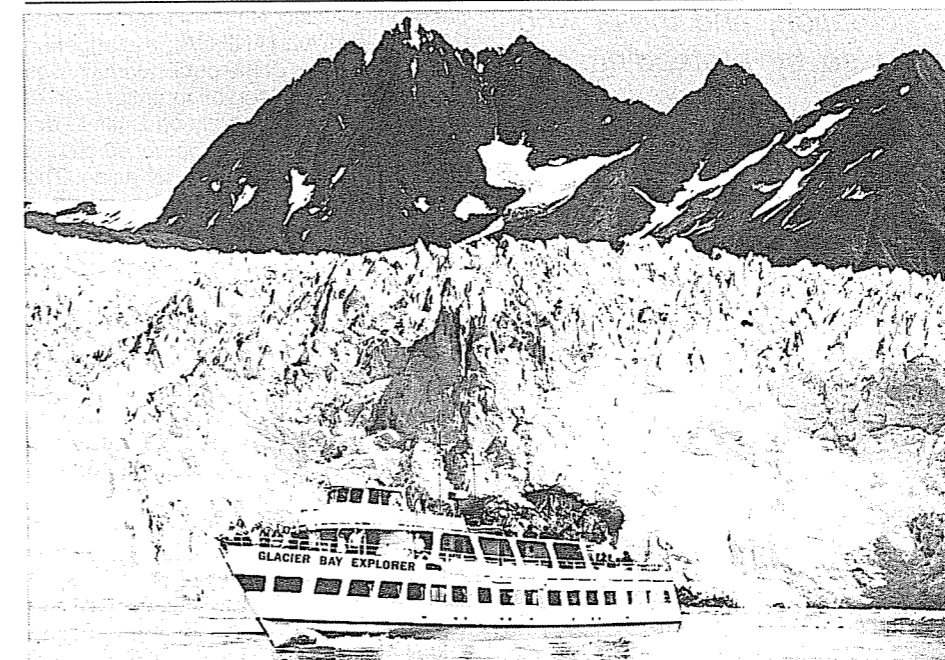
Winter 1989

Wilderness

Part I

Striking implications for Alaska

by Carl Portman



An expansion of federal Wilderness would only continue a serious trend toward restricting recreational opportunities and access. In Glacier Bay, a proposal to designate certain waterways federal Wilderness would lead to a ban on boats in those areas, limiting visitor experiences. (ATMS photo by Bob Giersdorf)

Alaska is indisputably a stunning and diverse land of tremendous resource potential. With vast natural resources of oil and gas, timber, strategic minerals and fish, America's 49th "star" has the means to diversify its economy and generate new wealth for its citizens and the nation.

With proper and practical land use policies which stress multiple uses of the public lands, Alaska's economy has grown to new heights and so has the standard of living for most Alaskans. In one way or another, all Alaskans have come to share in new wealth generated from resource development.

Proper land management procedures, which provide for nature while recognizing the needs of the economy, have encouraged the development of internationally significant arctic and sub-arctic resources. Development has taken place without destruction to public lands and natural resources.

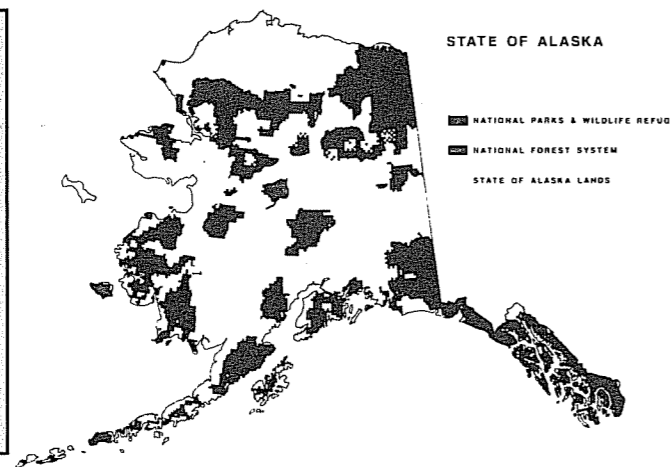
Yet Alaska, which has barely scratched the surface of its vast resource potential, may see many future economic oppor-

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41% of Alaska is federal park, refuge and forest

Alaska Land Ownership (millions of acres)

	1985	Ownership of Alaska
Federal lands		
Public domain	80.00	
Wildlife refuges	75.4	
Parks, preserves...	52.0	
Forests	23.0	
National Pet. Reserve	23.0	
Other	6.6	
All federal lands	260	60%
State lands	80.0	28%
Private lands	1.3	0.4%
Native lands	33.3	11.7%
Total Alaska lands	375	100%



Alaska Land Facts

- 154 million acres, or about 41% of Alaska is locked up in federal conservation units.
- 56 million acres have been designated Wilderness, representing 15% of Alaska. This area would consume all of Idaho, Minnesota, Utah or Kansas.
- Alaska has 62% of the designated Wilderness in the U.S.
- Some 70% of all national parks and 90% of all national wildlife refuges are in Alaska.

Consequences of Wilderness

- *"Wilderness designations represent a lost economic cost. It is vital that the cumulative effects of such lost opportunity be studied before each new wilderness designation is made."*

James Burling
Pacific Legal Foundation

- *"Wilderness does not promote recreation, and those who promote wilderness should not do so by pretending any benefit to the recreational economy."*

Senator Steve Symms
Idaho

- *"Sadly, the spirit of compromise has put way too much of this vast subcontinent off limits, out of reach ... We must roll back these massive land set asides and restore wider opportunity to this great land."*

Joe Henri
President, RDC Foundation, Inc.

- *"We are fed up with being cast as the bad guys because we produce products from earth resources or recreate on public land."*

Roberta Anderson
Western Timber Association

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tunities vanish under relatively new government policies affecting land use in general and federal Wilderness in particular. These policies have led to the continuing withdrawal of giant amounts of land from productive multiple-use management, leaving striking implications for hunting, recreation, oil and gas, timber, utilities, agriculture, mining, local governments and tourism.

Land withdrawals have clogged, impaired and severed access to a wide variety of resources. Without economical means of shipping the resources to market or the transporting of equipment, labor and materials to the worksite, resource development cannot occur.

In the late days of 1980, when Congress passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), a staggering 104 million acres of the public domain was withdrawn into conservation units, a great portion of which is entirely off limits to development of any kind. Some 50 million acres had previously been set aside. The grand total of 154 million acres, or about 41 percent of the giant state's land mass, "makes Alaska the largest repository of misdirected goodwill in the world," according to James Burling, an attorney with the Pacific Legal Foundation.

"Square inch for square inch, we have more land purposely taken out of productive multiple use than anywhere," Burling told several hundred delegates at a Las Vegas National Wilderness Conference in June.

One hundred million acres alone is bigger than the state of Montana. It is equivalent to the entire area of California. And on the face of it, many of the withdrawals were made in ignorance of the development values of the land. The small area on which development or access can occur has such a complicated procedure for achieving gov-

"Grazing doesn't always go with timber, timber doesn't always go with mining, mining doesn't always go with recreation, but you've got to put petty arguments aside and realize that we'll be history if we don't cooperate."

—Charles Cushman, National Inholders Assoc.

ernmental permission that in many cases has become a de facto denial of development.

Today Alaska has 70 percent of the nation's national parks and 90 percent of its wildlife refuges. It has 56 million acres in federal Wilderness areas where permanent development of roads, shelters, cabins or lodges is practically impossible. This area alone would consume the entire state of Utah, Idaho or Minnesota. This lock-up represents 15 percent of the state in pure federal Wilderness. Alaska has 62 percent of all the designated federal Wilderness in the United States.

The facts show Alaska has more than its fair share of protected wilderness. Yet, there is no satisfying the voracious appetites of environmental organizations that ceaselessly push to protect what is always "one of our last pristine wilderness areas."

Burling stressed that wilderness designations often represent an economic opportunity cost. He said it is vital that the cumulative effects of such lost opportunity be studied before each new wilderness designation is made.

The National Park Service is now evaluating the suitability of all non-designated wilderness areas in Alaska's national parks for the purpose of making new wilderness recommendations to Congress. In its wilderness review process, the park service has identified some 18 million acres suitable for wilderness classification. At the present time, NPS is considering recommending to Congress that 6 million acres be added to the National Wilderness Preservation System. (The Wilderness Society would like to triple that figure.)

Because wilderness designations clearly foreclose any opportunity for economic and resource development and have serious consequences upon the people who reside in or near these withdrawals, the Resource Development Council is recommending no additional wilderness zones. The Council believes the new additions are unnecessary since they would not significantly increase environmental protection already provided for non-wilderness park lands. Instead, the Council warns such an onerous designation would ultimately impair access, use of the area and adversely impact inholders within conservation units. They could even lead to the destruction of existing hunting cabins and prevent lodge owners near wilderness areas from using chainsaws to cut firewood used to provide heat for guests.

Ironically, the tourism industry would be seriously affected by new wilderness desig-

nations, which preclude destination tourism site development and practical access.

Tourists, especially the international, demand practical access, comfortable accommodations and a variety of visitor opportunities. Most are older tourists who are unwilling and unable to backpack and sleep in a damp tent. They are making the trip of a lifetime. They deserve better.

Wilderness advocates have portrayed themselves as representing tourism, but in reality they represent only a small fraction of the recreation public. They believe dispersed backcountry recreation, as opposed to commercial operations catering to a much larger segment of the general public, should have priority.

Thousands have come to Alaska to visit wild lands, and many have left disappointed and dejected about the very few accommodations available to them or their ability to experience the wilderness. The average tourist finds much of Alaska off limits and out of reach. On the other hand, what attractions which do exist in the very few accessible areas are now reaching the saturation point.

An expansion of wilderness areas within Alaska's national parks would only con-

tinue a serious trend toward restricting recreational opportunities and access. In Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, a proposal to designate certain waterways federal Wilderness would lead to a ban on cruise ships and fishing vessels in those areas.

The parks need facilities and management schemes which will allow greater public use and enjoyment. Access to and from the parks and their facilities for a wide variety of recreational opportunities is needed if tourism is to play a greater role in Alaska's economy. New wilderness designations would lock out a majority of the public and close the door on many new and diverse commercial visitor opportunities.

Since the passage of the Wilderness Act, wilderness visitor use is declining nationally. A recent report prepared for Senator Steve Symms of Idaho shows a marked drop in wilderness recreation. The report warns that 1.4 million acres of new wilderness in Idaho could cost the state's recreation industry \$730 million annually by the year 2000.

Symms said "wilderness does not promote recreation, and those who promote wilderness should not do so by pretending any benefit to the recreational economy."

Even wildlife can suffer in wilderness areas from a lack of management. Fires and insect infestations can rage out of control threatening nearby public and private lands. Several years ago the forest service tried to save a forest in a southwest wilderness area by cutting beetle-infested trees, only to be stopped by a Sierra Club lawsuit.

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New wilderness designations could lock out a majority of the public and close the door on many new diverse commercial visitor opportunities. (Exploration Cruise Lines photo by Bob and Ira Spring.)