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By Mr. JEFFORDS (for himself and Mr. Leahy):

[S. 2565](#). A bill to designate certain National Forest System land in the State of Vermont for inclusion in the National **Wilderness** Preservation system and designate a National Recreation Area; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

Mr. JEFFORDS . Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleague from Vermont, Mr. Leahy, in introducing the Vermont **Wilderness** Act of 2006. This legislation designates 48,051 acres within the Green Mountain National Forest for management under the 1964 **Wilderness** Act.

The Green Mountain National Forest constitutes more than 400,000 acres of woodlands in central and southern Vermont. The Forest hosts up to 3.4 million visitors each year and is capable of supporting a variety of uses, from timber production to snowmobiling to hiking, which contribute to Vermont's economy. The forest is also an important wildlife habitat and source of clean, fresh water. If well managed, the Green Mountain National Forest will remain one of Vermont's most precious environmental treasures, while continuing to support our state's economic and recreational needs for generations to come.

The National Forest Service is responsible for most aspects of national forest management but Congress reserved the authority to set aside undisturbed **wilderness** lands. Good stewardship of the forest requires leadership, and now is the time for us to accept this responsibility to designate additional **wilderness** areas.

Twenty-two years ago, as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, I joined my Senate colleagues, Mr. Stafford and Mr. Leahy, to introduce the Vermont **Wilderness** Act of 1984. That act designated 41,260 acres as **wilderness**. Since that time the Green Mountain National Forest has acquired over 110,000 additional acres, while the populations of the State and the region have increased. These changing demands, and the changing landscape, provide the opportunity and drive the need to designate additional land as **wilderness**.

The Vermont **Wilderness** Act of 1984 directed Congress to consider additional **wilderness** designations in the Green Mountain National Forest only after 15 years had elapsed and the management plan for the Forest had been thoroughly reviewed. With last month's adoption of a completely revised Land Resource Management Plan for the Green Mountain National Forest, these conditions have been met and it is time to act.

I have worked for the past 6 years with the other members of Vermont's Congressional delegation, the National Forest Service, and State leaders. I have reviewed comments from thousands of constituents, visited the forest on the ground and viewed it from the air, and spent countless hours studying maps. These new designations are the result of thorough analysis and thought, and we do not make them lightly.

Many Vermonters disagree with the need for any **wilderness** designations, much less additional lands to be set aside at this time. I understand their concerns, but I also recognize the intent of the **Wilderness** Act of 1964, and I believe deeply in the benefits of managing some areas so that forces of nature hold sway.

The Vermont **Wilderness** Act of 2006 designates two significant new **wilderness** areas: the 28,491-acre Glastenbury **wilderness** in southern Vermont, and the 12,437-acre Battell **wilderness** in central Vermont. These are pristine, remote forest lands, and would remain undisturbed for future generations.

The recently completed Land and Resource Management Plan for the Green Mountain National Forest is a credit to everyone who worked on it, and reflects the hard work of the U.S. National Forest Service. This plan calls for additions to several existing **wilderness** areas including Peru Peak, Big Branch, Breadloaf and Lye Brook. These recommended additions are included in this legislation, with some modification.

This legislation also calls for 16,890 acres of the Moosalamoo Recreation Area in Central Vermont to be designated a national recreation area. Moosalamoo exists today as a world-class destination for widely diverse outdoor recreation activities on both public and private land. Moosalamoo is managed cooperatively by a group of owners and it attracts visitors from far and wide for hiking, camping, Nordic and alpine skiing and other activities. From the Robert Frost interpretive trails to the blueberry management areas and oak clad escarpments, Moosalamoo is uniquely deserving of national recreation area designation.

The Green Mountain National Forest is an important source of wood products and the timber industry is critically important to Vermont's economy. These **wilderness** and national recreation area designations are not meant to interfere with a robust timber management program within the forest, and I will work to support that program at every opportunity.

As we introduce this legislation it is important to acknowledge the fine work of Supervisor Paul Brewster and the staff of the Green Mountain National Forest. They applied great skill and technical expertise in developing the new management plan for the forest. The same professionalism will certainly be applied to implement the plan. Our **wilderness** designations differ somewhat from those proposed by the Forest Service, which is the reason this authority is reserved for Congress, but the new management plan has helped to inform and guide our work.

It is with great pride that I join my colleagues to introduce the Vermont **Wilderness** Act of 2006. Our great state has been blessed with a beautiful natural landscape, which Vermonters have worked hard to preserve. This bill will continue in that tradition by helping to secure areas of the unspoiled **wilderness** that Vermont is known and admired for.

Mr. LEAHY . Mr. President, I join with Senator Jeffords today to introduce the Vermont **Wilderness** Act of 2006, to designate two new **wilderness** areas and to make a number of additions to existing **wilderness** areas in Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest. This legislation will also designate a new National Recreation Area (NRA) in the Green Mountain National Forest in the area commonly known as Moosalamoo.

The U.S. Forest Service has recently released its Record of Decision (ROD) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the revision of [*S3228] the Green Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. This has been an effort encompassing several years, a lengthy process including significant public involvement, and a great deal of difficult and detailed work on the part of the Forest Service staff in Vermont and our region.

I want to extend my appreciation and thanks to the staff of the Green Mountain National Forest for their perseverance and professionalism throughout the plan revision process. This has been

by no means an easy task, with Vermonters and other interested citizens who care deeply about the National Forest weighing in with sincere and often conflicting views on land, resource and forest management decisions.

While there is much of interest in such a comprehensive plan, the primary role of the Congress lies with **wilderness** and other related special designations, such as National Recreation Areas. The Vermont Congressional Delegation has taken this responsibility seriously as we have sought a compromise between those who would prefer significant additions in **wilderness** areas and those who would prefer none. If this recommendation were enacted, about a quarter of the current Green Mountain National Forest would be designated as **wilderness**.

Just as the recently released Land and Resource Management Plan for the Green Mountain National Forest has elicited abundant feedback across the spectrum of interested citizens and organizations, we expect our proposal to do the same. We offer this legislation as a good-faith effort to find a middle ground, and once this proposal is referred to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry_of which I am a member_we will welcome constructive comments and criticisms to improve the bill. Since the Vermont Congressional Delegation has long been on the public record in favor of additional **wilderness** designations within the Green Mountain National Forest, comments that are as specific as possible will be especially helpful in helping to refine our proposal.

In specific terms, this legislation proposes a new **wilderness** area in the Glastenbury Mountain area of approximately 28,500 acres. In the Romance, Monastery and Worth Mountain areas the bill proposes adding approximately 12,500 acres, which together would become the Battell **Wilderness** in honor of Joseph Battell, who once owned some 9,000 acres in this area and bequeathed thousands of acres to Middlebury College, which eventually became the core of the north half of the Green Mountain National Forest.

The bill also proposes designating approximately 4,200 acres for addition to the existing Breadloaf **Wilderness**, 2,200 acres to the Lye Brook **Wilderness**, 800 acres to the Peru Peak **Wilderness**, and 40 acres to the Big Branch **Wilderness**. The proposed Moosalamoo National Recreation Area covers approximately 17,000 acres.

This legislation does not include additional acreage for the George D. Aiken **Wilderness** Area or the Bristol Cliffs **Wilderness** Area. It does not propose a **wilderness** designation for the area known as Lamb Brook, and it does not propose a new National Recreation Area in the Somerset region.

Our legislation builds on the recommendations of the Forest Service. In many areas the Delegation bill closely tracks the Forest Service plan_Breadloaf, Big Branch and Peru Peak areas are nearly identical. In the Glastenbury area, the Forest Service added more than 8,000 acres to their original plan, and we have further increased the acreage of a proposed Glastenbury **Wilderness** Area. In addition, this legislation adds about 2,000 acres to the Lye Brook **Wilderness**, above the Forest Service recommendation. Finally, we are proposing the new Battell **Wilderness** Area, which encompasses lands the Forest Service included in a Remote Backcountry management category, which is essentially managed as a **wilderness** area.

In the Moosalamoo area, this legislation codifies the Moosalamoo National Recreation Area, which has the strong support of the various communities and local partners in the area. We believe this designation best represents the actual goals of the various stakeholders and merits this national designation. Furthermore, we have included the Forest Service's Escarpment management category in the designated area and have also included previously agreed upon management guidelines in the bill.

I would offer the following thoughts which we have returned to on those numerous occasions over recent years whenever this subject has been brought up for discussion in our State.

In sponsoring this legislation today, the Vermont Congressional Delegation is demonstrating our commitment to additional **wilderness** designations on the Green Mountain National Forest. The Green Mountain National Forest is the largest contiguous public land area in Vermont and within a days drive for over 70 million people. We are committed to protecting some National Forest lands for future generations under the National **Wilderness** Preservation System.

Our proposals have not been driven by acreage quotas, but rather by data supplied by the Forest Service and by interested Vermonters. Therefore, what is too much for some will be too little for others.

The timing of this introduction was conditioned so as to allow the Forest Service process to reach its conclusion and, at the same time, to enable Vermonters and other interested parties to review both the Forest Service and the Delegation recommendations. Throughout our deliberations, we have appreciated the help of the Forest Service staff and have recognized their commitment to their planning regulations, guidelines and timetable. We invite all Vermonters to join us in thanking the Forest Service staff for all the hard work in their planning effort.

While this legislation proposes to add significant **wilderness** to the Green Mountain National Forest, it bears noting that most of the lands designated in this bill are not suitable for timber harvesting. This legislation would retain many thousands of acres available for timber harvesting which will have to be managed in a fair, open and professional manner. We are committed to the development of such a process and we know the Forest Service shares this commitment. We invite all interested parties to join in this effort. It is our hope that given the superior manner in which the Forest Service conducted the Forest Plan Revision process, unnecessary appeals and litigation of the plan and future management activities can be avoided.

The Green Mountain National Forest has expanded since the last **wilderness** designations were made. As Senator Stafford, then Congressman Jeffords and I remember, during the consideration of the last Vermont **Wilderness** bill in 1984 there were many perspectives on the use of our National Forest. We assume there will be again this time. As we were 1984, we remain committed to carrying on the strong conservation legacy that generations of Vermonters, like Senator Robert Stafford, have fostered over the decades.

We urge anyone who is interested in the Green Mountain National Forest to review the whole Plan, as the Forest Service has recommended, and to look beyond their own primary areas of concern so that we can all do what we can to help implement the Plan.

In closing, I would note that the Delegation knows that you cannot undertake every possible use on every acre of National Forest land, and we believe most Vermonters support our approach to this issue. In recognition of this fact, we are introducing this legislation as a vision for the Green Mountain Forest for this and future generations.

By Mrs. BOXER (for herself and Mrs. Feinstein):

[S. 2567](#). A bill to maintain the rural heritage of the Eastern Sierra and enhance the region's tourism economy by designating certain public lands as **wilderness** and certain rivers as wild and scenic rivers in the State of California, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mrs. BOXER . Mr. President, today I am introducing "the Eastern Sierra Rural Heritage and Economic Enhancement Act," a bill that will provide protection for thousands of some of the most pristine, wild, and beautiful acres in California. I am glad to be joined in this effort by my colleague, Senator Feinstein. Representative McKeon, whose congressional districts contains these special lands, introduced companion legislation today in the House of Representatives.

[*S3230]

My bill will protect three very special California treasures in the Eastern Sierra. It makes considerable additions to existing Hoover **Wilderness** areas, which border on Yosemite National Park. These additions will protect the stunning High Sierra landscape of 11,000 foot snow-capped peaks and valleys, lush meadows and deep forests that people around the world associate with the Eastern Sierra.

These areas are also home to an abundance of wildlife, including black bear, mountain lion, mule deer, waterfowl, and bald eagles.

This land provides more than just visual beauty, however_it is also a recreational paradise. Year after year, hikers enjoy the approximately nine miles of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail that runs through this **wilderness**, and anglers enjoy the clear lakes and streams that support a number of species of wild trout. The bill will also protect areas adjacent to the Emigrant **Wilderness** area, including another two miles of the Pacific Crest Trail.

My legislation will also designate about 24 miles of the Amargosa River as a Wild and Scenic River. As the only river flowing into Death Valley, the Amargosa is an ecologically-important river in a dry desert area. Birds_and birdwatchers_abound in this area, both coming from far and wide to enjoy the river area.

In short, these areas are not just California's natural treasures_they are America's natural treasures. And that is why they deserve the highest level of protection possible. That is what this bill does.

I was proud to include most of these lands in my California Wild Heritage Act that I reintroduced last month. And I look forward to working with Senator Feinstein and Representative McKeon, and all my colleagues, to protect these special places forever.