

Oregon Caves Revitalization Act of 2013

- The Oregon Caves legislation expands the boundaries of the century-old Oregon Caves National Monument by transferring 4,070 acres from the U.S. Forest Service to the National Park Service and designating the land as a natural preserve. Setting aside this additional land will increase tourism to the largest marble cave open to the public west of the Continental Divide and encourage ecological forest restoration. The legislation also gives a scenic designation to the River Styx that travels through the caves – the nation’s first such distinction for an underground waterway.

Devil’s Staircase Wilderness Act of 2013

- The Devil’s Staircase legislation designates about 30,500 acres of the Siuslaw National Forest as wilderness and protects about 14 miles of the Wasson and Franklin Creeks. The proposed Devil’s Staircase Wilderness is the finest old-growth forest remaining in Oregon’s Coast Range, boasting huge Douglas-fir, cedar and hemlock trees. The land is protected as a Late-Successional Reserve by the Northwest Forest Plan, as a critical habitat for the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet, and as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern by the Bureau of Land Management. While the current designations help protect the land, the wilderness designation is needed to make those protections permanent.

Oregon Treasures Act of 2013

The Oregon Treasures Act of 2013 combines four bills introduced by Senator Wyden and cosponsored by Senator Merkley in 2011: the Chetco River Protection Act, the Rogue Wilderness Area Expansion Act, the Molalla River Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and the Cathedral Rock and Horse Heaven Wilderness Act.

Chetco River

- Identified by American Rivers as one of the nation’s most endangered rivers, the Chetco River is home to salmon and steelhead breeding grounds. The process of suction dredge mining can be very hazardous to the river’s ecosystem and threatens those breeding grounds. The bill permanently raises the federal protection levels along more than three miles of the Chetco and puts in place new prohibitions on future mining that will preserve the portions of the river designated Wild and Scenic. The bill also requires current mining claims to undergo a rigorous validation process in order to remain in place. In 2010, the Obama administration green-lighted a process that allows the Forest Service to put a freeze on all future mining claims along a portion of the river. That action and the legislation put forward today will protect the Chetco from invasive mining practices permitted under an 1872 law.

Rogue River

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- Identified in 2008 by American Rivers as the second most endangered river in the U.S., Wyden and Merkley have worked to provide additional protections for this important recreational, ecological and economic natural resource.

The bill adds 60,000 new acres of wilderness to the existing Wild Rogue Wilderness area and protects an additional 143 miles of tributaries that feed into the iconic Rogue River. The Wild Rogue Wilderness area is home to the popular stretch of the Rogue that goes by the historic cabin of western author Zane Grey. This designation will protect the habitats of bald eagle, osprey, spotted owl, bear, elk and cougar. The Rogue River is one largest salmon fisheries in Oregon and one of the few rivers in the nation that is a natural spawning ground for green sturgeon. The protection of the tributaries feeding into the Rogue will protect those spawning grounds as well as those of coho, Chinook, and steelhead.

Protecting the Rogue River has the support of 121 local and regional businesses and organizations. The Rogue is a hub for outdoor recreation, drawing thousands of visitors from around the world, and it is one of Oregon's most important sport and commercial fisheries, supporting hundreds of jobs in nearby communities.

Molalla River

- The Molalla River is a historic, economic and natural treasure in Oregon. In 2008, the citizens of Molalla came together and formed the Molalla River Alliance consisting of elected officials, conservation groups, law enforcement, and local citizens. The community decided to pursue a "wild and scenic" designation for their river to preserve the quality and biodiversity of the area while promoting tourism to aid the local economy.

The bill declares 21.3 miles of the Molalla River as "recreational" under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The bill also provides federal protection and recognition of the Molalla River under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This system was created by Congress in 1968 to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

This designation is notable for helping to safeguard the special character of these rivers, while also recognizing the potential for their appropriate use and development. It encourages river management that crosses political boundaries and promotes public participation in developing goals for river protection.

Horse Heaven and Cathedral Rock

- The legislation will consolidate what is currently a splintered ownership of land in this area and protect 17,340 acres of new wilderness along the lower John Day River. The bill gives the Bureau of Land Management the authority to swap land with private local landowners in order to create two large tracts that will be preserved as wilderness. The proposed Cathedral Rock Wilderness Area is on the west side of the wild and scenic John Day River, across from the Spring Basin

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Wilderness that was recently created. The Christian-based summer camp, Young Life, is one of three landowners that will swap land it owns adjacent to current BLM land in order to create two large swaths capable of being preserved.

The plan will improve public access and recreational opportunities, while also protecting many sensitive plant and animal species.