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DRAFT OF PROPOSED LETTER 3-19-57

Hon. _____
Member of Congress
Washington, D.C.

Dear Congressman _____:

The National Wilderness Preservation Act (H.R. 500) threatens the full economic development of the West by excluding lumbering, mining, grazing, watershed management, construction of dams and construction of roads. To illustrate how the proposed bill would suppress full economic development, consider some of the possible effects on specific resources:

1. Water. The Act would deprive expanding metropolitan and suburban populations in Arizona of essential water by preventing the construction of dams and by curtailing elimination of worthless trees and shrubs to increase water yields. It would also reduce water needed for domestic, industrial and agricultural uses.

2. Timber. In view of the Forest Service timber inventories that have repeatedly forecast serious timber shortages, is it logical to lock up timber resources in the vast acreages recommended for wilderness areas? Exclusion of logging not only deprives people of badly needed wood products, it is also wasteful. This can be seen in the Grand Canyon National Park where large trees are dying of old age, infestation and disease. Removal of overaged and diseased trees is an accepted silvicultural practice and will, in addition, improve recreational values. Exclusion of logging from the base acreages proposed for closure would impose a tremendous loss in stumpage fees.

3. Forage. Closure to livestock would curtail the estimated increase in livestock products necessary to feed a growing population. Economists agree that cattle production will have to be increased from 95 million head to 120-125 Million by 1975. Closure would also mean lost grazing fees to federal and state governments.

4. Game. The Act would interfere with sound wildlife management practices. What might happen is illustrated by the North Kaibab where hunting was prohibited because it was a Federal Game Refuge. Under closure, deer increased to a point where the range suffered from overuse. Starvation and disease finally reduced the overpopulated deer herd. Lifting the closure has furnished more game to hunt, has maintained a healthier herd, and has increased revenues to the State.

5. Mining. The Act would lock up gas, oil and mineral deposits. It would also mean a loss of revenue normally collected from gas and oil leases and royalties.

The proponents of the Wilderness Act claim it will serve the "permanent good of the whole people" by providing recreation facilities. Actually, the exclusive requirements of the Act will serve only a select few and deny the more popular forms of recreation to the many. For example, the requirement excluding

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construction of storage reservoirs denies development of such forms of recreation as boating, swimming and fishing. Lake Mead provides all these facilities to a large number of people -- an impossibility had the Wilderness Act prevented construction of Hoover Dam.

The Wilderness Act could deny the development of winter sports areas in such mountain country as the Mt. Thomas roadless area; it could seriously restrict the summer home-site expansion plans of the Whiteriver Apache and other Indian tribes; it would increased federal costs, such as fire suppression, while decreasing revenues.

One of the professed reasons for the Act is to provide protected natural areas for scientific study, even though hundreds of protected areas already exist and are forgotten. For example, the five Old Hill Plots of the Coconino National Forest, in Arizona, were fenced in 1911 and studied at irregular intervals until 1941. They have not been re-measured in the past sixteen years, and this is typical of many other study plots. How can the Act give assurance the proposed wilderness areas will be used for scientific study?

The proposed Act would seriously interfere with the activities of such federal agencies as the Bureau of Reclamation, Army Engineers, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Indian Service and Park Service, all of which are dedicated to the wise <u>use</u> of resources.

Perhaps the best argument against this bill is that <u>protection</u> cannot be guaranteed <u>in perpetuity</u>. There is no guaranteed protection against wildfires, which has been clearly demonstrated in existing wilderness areas swept by wildfires. People are gradually coming to realize that often so-called <u>protection</u> builds up fuels for bigger and more destructive wildfires, particularly where fire roads are excluded. Are we to protect wilderness areas merely to build up fuels and tinder for larger and more disastrous fires?