THE WILDERNESS ACT
The Wilderness Act is a bipartisan piece of legislation signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on September 3rd, 1964. The act established the National Wilderness Preservation System, which serves to permanently protect some of the most sensitive and undisturbed ecosystems in the United States. What began with 9.1 million acres of wild lands has grown to cover more than 100 million acres in just over 50 years. These acres are spread across more than 750 areas of protection spanning 44 states. Wilderness designation continues to be the highest form of protection federal lands can receive.

There are several wilderness proposals from both sides of the aisle currently languishing in Congress, proposals that will provide tangible protections for our natural heritage and significantly improve the health of our ecosystems.

WILDERNESS AND LOCAL ECONOMIES
America’s wild lands represent the very best of democracy. Opening up these lands to the public provides us all with the opportunity to engage in exhilarating recreational activities, and to absorb the stunning landscape vistas and unique wildlife our nation has to offer. These lands are also key drivers of local economies. Outdoor recreation generates $646 billion for the U.S. economy every year and generates 6.51 million jobs. Yearly benefits, including clean air and water provided by natural areas, is estimated at $1.6 trillion annually. Coastal marshes and mangroves are essential barriers for protecting inland communities from storm surges, at an estimated value of more than $23 billion annually. Preserving public lands as wilderness - or through other administrative designations - benefits local communities and economies, and serves as a scientific yardstick for measuring the health of natural systems.

WILDERNESS AND CLIMATE DISRUPTION
Setting aside public land as wilderness provides space for plants and wildlife to adapt to changing climate. Wilderness designation in particular provides numerous benefits for wildlife and increases habitat resiliency in a variety of different ways. Wilderness designation protects habitat from destructive industrialization and other non-climate stressors such as sprawl, oil and gas development, mining, and illegal off-road vehicle abuse. Protecting wilderness and wildlife migration corridors allows wildlife a chance to migrate and adapt in order to survive. The chances for successful migration will be greatly improved by the protection of large core areas of healthy habitat linked together by connecting migration routes. Wilderness designation also assures the ability of healthy habitats to absorb excess amounts of carbon in the atmosphere.
Sierra Club strongly urges support for the following pieces of wilderness and wildlife legislation, which will help to protect large core habitat areas, key species, and foster habitat connectivity:

- **America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act** — Adds 8.5 million acres of qualifying Bureau of Land Management (BLM) public lands in Utah to the National Wilderness Preservation System, safeguarding the region’s wealth of ecological and cultural resources from rampant off-road vehicle use and fossil fuel development.

- **Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection Act** — Halts the oil and gas drilling exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge currently being rushed by the Trump administration. The Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection Act would protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil and gas drilling by repealing the controversial provision tucked into the 2017 Republican tax law that mandated oil and gas leasing, development, and production in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge.

- **Central Coast Heritage Protection Act** — Designates more than 245,000 acres of new and expanded wilderness in the Los Padres National Forest and the Carrizo Plain National Monument. These areas are home to over 468 species of wildlife, including the endangered California condor and the southern steelhead. The bill would also designate the new Condor National Recreation Trail, connecting the northern and southern portions of the Los Padres National Forest.

- **Colorado Outdoor Recreation Economy Act** — Protects both natural resources and recreational opportunities with roughly 400,000 acres of public land in Colorado, including 73,000 acres of new wilderness areas, 80,000 acres of recreation and conservation management areas, over 200,000 acres of mineral withdrawals, as well as the first National Historic Landscape around Camp Hale’s storied landscape.

- **Colorado Wilderness Act** — Safeguards more than 740,000 acres of land located in 33 critical wildlife and ecologically-sensitive areas in Colorado. The legislation emphasizes the value of recreation, protection of wildlife and clean water in protecting the lands permanently.

- **Land and Water Conservation Fund Permanent Funding Act** — Permanently funds the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at the authorized $900 million and ensures said funding is not raided by the annual appropriations process. Created over 50 years ago as a bipartisan program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) uses revenues from offshore oil and gas to safeguard our public lands and waterways, provide recreational opportunities, and acquire new lands for public use.

- **Oregon Recreation Enhancement Act** — Strengthens Southwestern Oregon’s burgeoning outdoor recreation economy by establishing the 128,000 acres of Recreation Areas, expanding the existing Wild Rogue Wilderness Area by approximately 60,000 acres, and withdrawing more than 100,000 acres of U.S. Forest Service land from destructive mining.

- **Roadless Area Conservation Act** — Permanently codifies the Roadless Rule and strengthens protections for 58.5 million acres of pristine National Forest System lands across 39 states from logging and road building. This bill is direct rebuke of multiple Congressional and Administrative attempts to strip protections from millions of acres of roadless areas in Utah and Alaska.

- **San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act** — Protects 31,069 acres of wilderness — including two new areas, the Yerba Buena and Condor Peak Wilderness — and also designates 45.3 miles of wild rivers in California’s San Gabriel Mountains. This area is a key source of clean water, recreational opportunities, and critical wildlife habitat for the region.

- **Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act** — Protects more than 126,000 acres of new Wilderness in the Olympic National Forest, expanding recreational use of the region. The bill would also designate 19 rivers as Wild and Scenic, protecting both public access and water quality.