

## **ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES IN S. 22, THE OMNIBUS PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2009**

The House will soon take up the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009. This legislation is comprised of over 160 bipartisan bills that would preserve key components of America's natural heritage and provide important economic benefits to struggling local economies. The relevant authorizing committees have worked through the issues, precedents and costs on all of the included bills over a period of many months and in some cases several years. Senator Bingaman has packaged these initiatives into S. 22, which passed the Senate on 1/15/09 by a vote of 73-21. This legislation contains no earmarks (as defined by the Senate), has no PAYGO issues, and deserves to be thoughtfully considered on its merits, particularly the economic benefits its passage would provide during the deepening recession.

### **LAND CONSERVATION BRINGS JOBS AND DOLLARS TO LOCAL ECONOMIES**

The conservation designations in the Omnibus Public Land Management Act will provide important economic benefits for rural economies across the United States. By providing jobs in recreation and tourism, increasing local property values, and providing attractive places for residents to live and work, wilderness designation provides significant benefits to local economies. On average, each 10,000 acres of wilderness designated provides six new jobs in local communities.<sup>1</sup> Nationwide, outdoor recreation contributes \$730 billion to the American economy, while supporting 6.5 million jobs.<sup>2</sup>

The good jobs, increased property values, and healthy landscapes are important reasons why numerous local businesses and Chambers of Commerce support the conservation provisions within the bill. In West Virginia, for example, over 100 local businesses support the Wild Monongahela Act. The Wyoming Range Legacy Act is supported by 35 local businesses, as well as the Wyoming Tourism Board, Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce, and Wyoming Outfitters and Guides Association.

### **WATER SETTLEMENTS AND LAND CONVEYANCES ARE ECONOMIC DRIVERS**

The Omnibus Public Land Management Act contains 20 land conveyances and 3 water settlements that are critically important to the local economies they affect. For example, The Nevada Cancer Institute Land Conveyance (H.R. 1311 in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, Sec. 2603 of S. 22) conveys 80 acres of public land to the nonprofit Nevada Cancer Institute for expansion of its Medical Campus. This expansion will create jobs and further much-needed cancer research. The Sunrise Mountain Instant Study Area Release (H.R. 816 in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, Sec. 2608 in S. 22) conveys land adjacent to Las Vegas for the construction of an important flood control project. Once passed, this provision will create construction and maintenance jobs and shield 1,800 urban acres from flooding.

The San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement (S. 27 in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress; Title X, Subtitle A in S. 22) finally resolves a long-standing water dispute regarding allocation of water from the San Joaquin River in the state of California. Title X authorizes the Secretaries of Interior and Commerce to implement the provisions of a landmark court settlement, reached by conservation groups and the government in 2006. Once passed, this bill will provide much-needed stability in water allocations to thousands of Central Valley farmers and residents who rely on San Joaquin water as the lifeblood of their local economies. These are just a few of the many provisions in S. 22 that will provide economic benefits and certainty to local communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Loomis, J.B. and Richardson, R. 2001. Economic values of the U.S. Wilderness system: Research evidence to date and questions for the future. *Int'l. Journal of Wilderness* 7(1): 31-34.

<sup>2</sup> Outdoor Industry Foundation. 2006. *The Active Outdoor Recreation Economy: A \$730 Billion Contribution to the U.S. Economy*. Available at <http://www.outdoorindustry.org/>.