

February 9, 2009

Re: S. 22, The Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009

Dear Representative:

The Nature Conservancy urges you to support the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act when it comes before the House of Representatives. This omnibus act is a historic and bipartisan legislative package that addresses many pressing national, regional and local conservation needs. The Conservancy has been deeply involved in a number of the programs that would be authorized by this legislation.

Among the major national provisions of the Act that advance the conservation of forests, rivers, coastal and marine resources are:

- The Forest Landscape Restoration Program (FLRP) would provide new authority to prioritize and fund ecological restoration treatments for forests under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service and Department of the Interior. The legislation provides financial incentives for federal land managers to focus fuels treatments on large landscapes and leverage investments in utilization of woody biomass created from restoration activities. The results of this legislation will include an overall reduction of wildfire costs by focusing funding on a set of large-scale, collaborative, science-based, sustainable projects where wildfire risks are high. (Title IV).
- The Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) would protect areas that have significant conservation, recreation, ecological, historical or aesthetic values, and lands where these values are threatened. CELCP has a strong history of protecting biologically significant coastal landscapes. Title XII of the Omnibus also includes other important ocean programs, including advancing climate change adaptation and coastal/marine mapping. (Title XII, subtitle E).

The Nature Conservancy has also worked in collaboration with multiple partners to develop viable solutions to difficult regional natural resource issues. Principal among these are:

- The Owyhee Public Lands Management Act would designate more than 517,000 acres of wilderness in the Owyhee-Bruneau Canyonlands of southwestern Idaho, along with nearly

315 miles of National Wild and Scenic Rivers and other environmental protections. This legislation, championed by Senator Crapo, also provides for multiple use of other lands, including OHV recreation and grazing, following BLM land-use evaluations. (Title I, subtitle F).

- The Washington County, Utah bill would designate more than 260,000 acres of land in Utah as wilderness and 166 miles of the Virgin River and its tributaries as National Wild and Scenic Rivers. This legislation, championed by Senator Bennett, would also create two National Conservation Areas in Washington County – creating protections for the desert tortoise and recreational opportunities on almost 140,000 acres. It also permits the sale of ecologically insignificant lands identified in the BLM's local Resource Management Plan and calls for the designation of the High Desert Off-Highway Vehicle Trail. (Title I, subtitle O).
- The Conservancy has also worked closely with Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, her Senate colleagues and the National Park Service on the Everglades National Park Expansion provision. This legislation will assure the long-term protection of a key resource in Florida Bay. (Title VII, subtitle 7107).

The vast majority of bills in the package have little to no opposition, strong local support and broad, bi-partisan Congressional support. The Nature Conservancy urges members of the House to approve the Senate-passed version unchanged, so that it can be signed into law by President Obama.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark R Terzelle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.