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Comments: Please keep the entire Great Burn proposed wilderness intact and recommend it for formal Wilderness designation under the national Wilderness Act. Wilderness is the gold standard of conservation, and this gem deserves the best conservation. Other roadless wildlands in the same national forest should also be protected and conserved via the Wilderness Act.

Among the threats are mechanized recreation, road construction, resort development, fragmentation, forest management plans that would undermine wilderness qualities, pressures from growing population, privatization proposals, and cumulative impacts. Recreation is not conservation!

Wilderness is the best option available. Wilderness is a national resource for future generations as well as our own. Wilderness protects biodiversity by providing habitat for public wildlife and flora. Wilderness protects watersheds for people as well as the rest of nature. Wilderness stores carbon. Wilderness is part of our historical and cultural heritage. Wilderness provides alternative to mechanized recreation and to road-accessible recreation. Wilderness is an idea, an ideal, a value appreciated by even those unable to visit. Furthermore, Wilderness in no way diminishes the multiple uses of the vast other public lands in the region.

On one day in 1964 Lyndon B. Johnson signed laws providing for recreational lands and for wilderness areas. He said,

"This is a very happy and historic occasion for all who love the great American outdoors, and that, needless to say, includes me. The two bills that I am signing this morning are in the highest tradition of our heritage as conservators as well as users of America's bountiful natural endowments."

On September 03, 1964, President Johnson at the signing of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Bill said: "The land and water conservation bill assures our growing population that we will begin, as of this day, to acquire on a pay-as-you-go basis the outdoor recreation lands that tomorrow's Americans will require." (President Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks Upon Signing the Wilderness Bill and the Land and Water Conservation Fund Bill," September 03, 1964, at The American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-upon-signing-the-wilderness-bill-and-the-land-and-water-conservation-fund-bill/>)

In contrast, the 1964 Wilderness Act put emphasis on preservation over use or enjoyment. The law explained: "In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness."

On September 03, 1964, President Johnson said at the signing of the Wilderness Act: "The wilderness bill preserves for our posterity, for all time to come, 9 million acres of this vast continent in their original and unchanging beauty and wonder." (President Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks Upon Signing the Wilderness Bill and the Land and Water Conservation Fund Bill," September 03, 1964, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-upon-signing-the-wilderness-bill-and-the-land-and-water-conservation-fund-bill/>)

Also on September 03, 1964, President Johnson signed a law designating the initial wilderness areas under the

Wilderness Act, including in Montana the Anaconda-Pintler, Bob Marshall, Cabinet, Gates of the Mountains, and Selway-Bitterroot Wildernesses. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wilderness_areas_of_the_United_States/)

But 9 million acres proved inadequate for the preservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity so more lands have been added to the Wilderness System, as provided by the 1964 law.

Furthermore, recreation is not conservation. Congress and LBJ recognized that in 1964, and our laws still recognize that.

But we now have a Wilderness deficit in Montana, and the nation. As ecologist George Wuerthner explained, only 3.4 million acres out of the state's nearly 94 million acres are congressionally designated Wilderness. See Wuerthner's article "Montana's Wilderness Deficit," Missoulian, September 11, 2019, https://missoulian.com/opinion/columnists/montana-s-wilderness-deficit/article_d0218248-3eed-5ddb-a935-81a44532b4f5.html/.

Montana's wilderness deficit/.

The Great Burn Wilderness is needed for Montana and for the nation!