

## ***PRESS RELEASE-- VA Forest Watch***

**Immediate Release**  
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### **Virginia Ridge and Valley Act Passes Both Houses of Congress**

#### **Bill Protecting 53,000 of the Jefferson National Forest goes to President for Signature**

The Virginia Ridge and Valley Act, a wilderness and national scenic area bill that protects 53,000 acres of southwestern Virginia's most unique wild places, passed the US House of Representatives on Wednesday.

Virginia Forest Watch was one of several conservation groups taking a leading role in shepherding the bill through Congress.

The bill establishes six new wilderness areas, a wilderness study area, and two new scenic areas, and will expand six existing wilderness areas in the Jefferson National Forest.

The Virginia Ridge and Valley Act has broad bi-partisan support including a majority of the Virginia congressional delegation, current and past governors of Virginia, Virginia Tourism Corporation, local businesses, faith groups, Garden Club of Virginia, and International Mountain Bicycling Association.

Once signed into law by the President, protected areas will include:

**Stone Mountain** Wilderness Area, in Lee County

**Bear Creek** National Scenic Area, in Smyth County

**Lynn Camp Creek** Wilderness Study Area, in Bland County

**Garden Mountain** Wilderness Area, in Bland County

**Hunting Camp Creek** Wilderness Area, in Bland County

**Brush Mountain East** Wilderness Area, in Craig County

**Brush Mountain** Wilderness Area, in Montgomery County

**Raccoon Branch** Wilderness Area, in Smyth County

**Seng Mountain** National Scenic Area, in Smyth County

**Shawvers Run** Wilderness Addition, in Craig County

**Mountain Lake** Wilderness Addition, in Craig County, Giles County, Va. & Monroe County, WV

**Peters Mountain** Wilderness Addition, in Giles County

**Little Wilson Creek** Wilderness Addition, in Grayson County

**Lewis Fork** Wilderness Addition, in Grayson County, &

**Kimberling Creek** Wilderness Addition, in Bland County

## Maps and Photos

### Maps of newly protected areas:

[Map of all areas](#)

[Map of Clinch area](#)

[Map of Mt. Rogers/Walker Mountain area](#)

[Map of Mountain Lake area](#)

### Photos of newly protected areas:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 25, 2009

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House Passes Historic Protection for Wilderness, Rivers, Parks

Washington, D.C.- The biggest public lands bill in decades cleared its final hurdle today, when the U.S. House of Representatives voted to pass it. The Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 safeguards millions of acres of new wilderness, protects hundreds of miles of rivers, expands trails, and keeps critical habitat in Wyoming safe from oil and gas leasing.

"This is the biggest wilderness protection bill in decades," said Sierra Club executive director Carl Pope. "Today, Congress has helped ensure that we will have a wild legacy to pass on to our children and grandchildren. This bill helps guarantee that future generations will be able to hike in pristine forests from California to West Virginia. The bill ensures that Americans will have a chance to fish untouched rivers and watch antelope migrate in the wild."

The bill protects more than two million acres of wilderness in nine states, including the Sierra Nevada mountains of California, Oregon's Mt. Hood, and Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado.

"As global warming begins to impact wildlife, it's urgent that we protect the corridors where animals migrate and the habitat where they live and raise their young," Pope said. "This bill will help do that."

It also shelters over a million acres of key hunting and fishing grounds on the Wyoming Range from oil and gas drilling.

"Places like the Wyoming Range provide key habitat for animals like pronghorn antelope. If we hope to keep outdoor traditions like camping, hunting, and fishing alive, we need to protect the public lands that support them."

The bill adds permanence to the 26-million-acre National Landscape Conservation System, protects hundreds of miles of free-flowing rivers in six states, and designates numerous new National Scenic Trails, Natural Historic Sites, and National Heritage Areas across the United States.

"Wilderness, rivers, trails and parks support important tourist economies across the country," said Pope. "This legislation keeps our last, best places safe from unchecked industrial development. It will help protect the tourist dollars and jobs that hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation generate."

#### Overview of the Omnibus Lands Package:

-The bill codifies and adds permanence to the National Landscape Conservation System, which includes all of the Clinton/Babbitt-era national monuments, wilderness study areas, and other protective designations, encompassing more than 26 million acres.

-The bill will protect more than 1 million acres of the Wyoming Range from oil and gas development.

-The bill also includes the San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement Act.

The package includes five important ocean protections:

1. NOAA Undersea Research Program Act
2. The Ocean and Coastal Mapping Integration Act
3. The Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act
4. The Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring Act
5. The Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program.

Wilderness Protection includes:

1. Wild Monongahela Wilderness - WV
2. Virginia Ridge and Valley Wilderness - VA
3. Mt. Hood Wilderness - OR
4. Copper Salmon Wilderness - OR
5. Cascade Siskiyou National Monument (Includes Soda Mt. Wilderness) - OR
6. Owyhee Public Land Management - ID
7. Sabinoso Wilderness - NM
8. Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore Wilderness - MI
9. Oregon Badlands Wilderness - OR
10. Spring Basin Wilderness - OR
11. Eastern Sierra and Northern San Gabriel Wilderness - CA
12. Riverside County Wilderness - CA
13. Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park Wilderness - CA
14. Rocky Mountain National Park Wilderness - CO
15. Washington County - UT