

The San Rafael Western Legacy District and the National Conservation Act

Mr. Chairman, as a Westerner, and not the near West, like my friends, the gentlemen from Colorado and Utah, but the real West, out there in the West Coast, I have some modest sense of what goes on in wilderness areas. I have spent a little time interacting with people over the last 30 years as an elected official. I have watched the dynamic.

I would not pretend to be an expert in the wilderness areas in Utah, but I would take some exception with perhaps lumping in my friend from Colorado with people who do not quite know what they are talking about. I would venture a bet that there is nobody in this legislative body that has spent more time on foot and on watercraft going through this area than the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. Udall). He is offering this up not as an extremist.

Again, I am concerned about the rhetoric that is sometimes employed when talking about people who are concerned about the protection of these precious resources that belong to the American people as extremist.

I am one of 160 cosponsors in this assembly of H.R. 1732, America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, which would go far beyond the amendment offered by my friend, the gentleman from Colorado. I do not think those 160 people or the vast majority of groups and organizations and media outlets that are involved in supporting it could be characterized as extremists. Indeed, I come from a western State, and I think a lot of the people would be regarded pretty much as mainstream.

Coming forward, I am supporting the Udall amendment and against my good friend, the gentleman from New York. Often I find I am on the same side on issues of protecting wilderness values. But the question that I posed to him in terms of what would be protected in terms of those 202 lands, it is clear if we look at the map that what the Boehlert amendment would do would be to extend it to the portion that is in the bill itself.

The Udall amendment would go far beyond that to deal not with a political fix that makes sense in terms of the local politics in Utah, in terms of county boundaries and where roads are. But looking at it from satellite, looking at it in terms of an ecosystem, the Udall amendment would provide wilderness study. It would not designate it as wilderness, but it would require that we get on with the study, and it would reserve to this Congress the ability of making a wilderness designation, if that is what is warranted, over the whole area, and not having

degraded it in the time being.

These are areas that are under assault. I am sure that my friend, the gentleman from New York (Mr. Boehlert), would not like to see this area eroded away, that we would have an arbitrary fracture of the whole wilderness potential area; have damage, have people establish in their mind that it is severable, when in fact I think he would agree, based on his environmental orientation, that it is not.

I have great sympathy for the problems of people who are in small States where these are very inflamed and sensitive issues. I know there are strong cross-currents. We need to respect them. There has been lots of opportunity in Utah, and that will continue.

I respect what my colleagues from the Utah delegation have done, and Secretary Babbitt. But I think we ought not to foreclose the opportunity of doing this right by adopting the Boehlert amendment and undercutting what the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. Udall) is trying to do, protect the options of this Congress and protect the future of that area.