

## H.R. 4089 – It’s Bad for Sportsmen, Bad for Wildlife, and Bad for America

### The Truth About H.R. 4089

H.R. 4089 the “Sportsmen’s Heritage Act” is the most recent in a series of measures pushed by House Republicans to undermine our nation’s environmental and public land protection laws.

Despite its title, the bill will have adverse consequences for the millions of hunters and anglers who rely on our nation’s public lands and forests for quality hunting and fishing opportunities. It contains provisions that will carve up, or flat out eviscerate, three of the nation’s bedrock environmental laws.

Buried within H.R. 4089 are three provisions that would:

- undercut the protection of Congressionally designated wilderness areas
- eviscerate the President’s authority to designate national monuments under the Antiquities Act; and
- carve gaping loopholes in the National Environmental Policy Act.

*“[H.R. 4089] could result in enormous negative consequences for world renowned hunting and fishing destinations, conservation and public lands fish and wildlife habitat.”*  
—Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

These provisions do not serve the interests of hunters and anglers, and will do grave harm to the nation’s public lands and wilderness.

### Sneak Attack on Wilderness Destroys Hunting and Fishing Opportunities

The Wilderness Society supports recreational hunting and fishing in designated wilderness areas, activities that are clearly permitted by the Wilderness Act of 1964. Unfortunately, H.R. 4089 adds a gaping loophole into the Wilderness Act that could allow the use of motor vehicles, road construction, and other forms of development within 110 million acres of congressionally-designated wilderness areas.

Wilderness areas offer unparalleled hunting and fishing opportunities in large part *because* motorized recreation and development are not permitted. Opening wilderness areas to motorized vehicles and development would destroy the high quality hunting and fishing opportunities these areas currently provide, while inviting unnecessary litigation and controversy. Amendments that would have ensured that the bill does *not* open the door to wholesale development in designated wilderness were twice defeated in the House.

*How does undermining wilderness protection serve hunters or the American public?*

## Viscerating the Antiquities Act

H.R. 4089 now includes a provision, added by House Republicans during the floor debate, which would eviscerate the long-standing authority of the president to designate national monuments under authority of the Antiquities Act. The provision would no longer allow the president to establish a national monument on federal land without the approval of a state legislature and the governor. The practical effect of this provision is to nullify the Antiquities Act altogether, a law that is one of America's bedrock conservation statutes. Another provision would severely restrict the BLM's ability to stop vandalism on the National Monuments it manages. The Antiquities Act has been used 16 presidents -- both Republican and Democratic -- since Theodore Roosevelt's administration, and has assured that millions of acres of public lands used by hunters, anglers, hikers and others will be protected from incompatible commercial development.

*The practical effect [of H.R. 4089's wilderness provisions] could be to open Wilderness to all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), snowmobiles, and motorboats if they are used for hunting, fishing, or shooting.*

—National Wildlife Federation

*How does nullifying the Antiquities Act serve hunters or the American public?*

## Carving Loopholes in the National Environmental Policy Act

Another provision of the bill, Sec. 104(c)(1)(B), is apparently intended to exempt from National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review decisions about hunting and fishing on public lands. Curtailing such challenges is a two-edged sword – once public involvement in land management decisions is eliminated, managers are free to both open *and close* fishing and hunting areas without stakeholder input. As written, the provision would allow the federal agencies to *close* areas to hunting and fishing to accommodate other activities -- such as energy and mineral development -- without assessing the environmental consequences of doing so. Public participation should be welcomed, not eliminated, so that decisions by public servants are understood, non-arbitrary, and responsive to public concerns.

*How does eliminating public participation in public land management serve hunters or the American public?*

House Republicans are advancing numerous measures that would roll back existing environmental protections, sell off public lands to developers and corporate polluters, and restrict the president's authority to protect public lands from damaging uses. We urge you to oppose H.R. 4089.



H.R. 4089 could allow motorized vehicles in 110 million acres of America's wilderness. If the bill becomes law, damage like this— from the Nez Perce National Forest in Idaho—could become commonplace in wilderness areas.

For more information, contact:

Paul Spitler, Director of Wilderness Policy – 202-429-2672 – [paul\\_spitler@twos.org](mailto:paul_spitler@twos.org)

Dave Alberswerth, Senior Policy Advisor – 202.429-2685 – [dave\\_alberswerth@twos.org](mailto:dave_alberswerth@twos.org)

