

Marilynne Keyser  
President, Friends and Neighbors of the Deschutes Canyon Area  
Testimony RE: HR 2075  
Public Lands, Forest, and Mining Subcommittee  
Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
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My name is Marilynne Keyser and I am a 17-year resident of Crooked River Ranch in central Oregon and president of the Friends and Neighbors of the Deschutes Canyon Area, also known as FANs. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HR 2075, the Crooked River Ranch Fire Protection Act. FANs is an all-volunteer grassroots organization at Crooked River Ranch started by neighbors who value the public lands surrounding our community and believe in the importance of local involvement in managing federal lands. With our nearly 400 members, we focus on the stewardship and protection of the Whychus-Deschutes area, which includes the Deschutes Canyon-Steelhead Falls Wilderness Study Area (WSA) that will be impacted by HR 2075.

We have several serious concerns about the approach of HR 2075. The title of the bill itself is misleading, and we do not believe that HR 2075 as it's currently written will achieve its stated goal of protecting Crooked River Ranch from wildfire. We urge you to instead pursue a comprehensive approach to address fire risk on public lands in our area that also addresses the many complex issues on this wild landscape.

Our organization is not opposed to WSA release, but the way it is being done in HR 2075 has short circuited a local stakeholder process. Removing 832 acres from the WSA, as HR 2075 proposes, will not automatically result in better fire protection for Crooked River Ranch. The Bureau of Land Management's policy for the WSA is already to suppress all fires aggressively, using both aerial and mechanical means, because of the close proximity of homes. In order to be effective and supported by the community, release of public lands from WSA status must be accompanied by other land management designations and a management plan to address the broad array of issues impacting the Whychus-Deschutes area.

FANs has long recognized the need to implement fire risk reduction measures on both public and private lands in and around Crooked River Ranch. That is why we were active participants in a working group of local stakeholders, including the Fire Chief and Homeowner's Association President, that began meeting in 2015 to discuss wildfire and public lands management. Working over a year, this group developed a collaborative approach that would give Crooked River Ranch the tools to protect itself from wildfire while also addressing longstanding questions

about the management of Whychus-Deschutes, one of the most scenic, wild places in Central Oregon.

A concept emerged that is a true win-win solution. It includes urgently needed, common sense actions that would measurably improve the safety of the community and simultaneously protect unique public lands that provide great cultural, ecological and recreational value.

There is also a clear need to reduce wildfire risk more broadly on other public lands throughout the Whychus-Deschutes region. Neighboring landowners outside of Crooked River Ranch have asked for measures to help them prevent catastrophic fire from threatening property and human safety. HR 2075 does nothing to address the needs of stakeholders outside of Crooked River Ranch.

Although the public lands impacted by HR 2075 are located in Central Oregon, the Whychus-Deschutes area is treasured by people throughout Oregon and beyond. These canyons contain outstanding recreation opportunities, one of the highest concentrations of cultural sites and artifacts in our region, and critical habitat for native plants, fish and wildlife. All of these resources are currently threatened by illegal off-road vehicle abuse, recreation overuse, and vandalism. Certain public lands in this area need and deserve permanent protection. Any land released from WSA status and certain other lands within Whychus-Deschutes should be designated as a special management area to protect these threatened resources.

Finally, we need to ensure land managers have the direction and resources they need to tackle these complex and serious issues. FANs volunteers have donated thousands of hours to helping the BLM restore and maintain our public lands. We hope to have the opportunity in the future to help with the implementation of solutions to reduce fire risk and protect critical resources on public lands.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify on HR 2075. I urge you to consider expanding this bill to address the concerns of all the stakeholders of this incredible wild landscape.

Marilynne Keyser, President, Friends and Neighbors of the Deschutes Canyon Area

[mtkeyser@gmail.com](mailto:mtkeyser@gmail.com)

[fansofdeschutes.org](http://fansofdeschutes.org)