



**Steve Moyer**  
*Vice President for Government Affairs*

April 25, 2013

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Murkowski,

Trout Unlimited is writing on behalf of its 140,000 members across the country to present our positions on bills to be considered in the April 25, 2013 hearing in the Energy and Natural Resources Public Lands Subcommittee. Sportsmen know the value of public land; it provides all hunters and anglers access to the highest quality fish and game habitat in the country. Public lands often contain the headwater streams that provide critical habitat for native fish and ensure quality drinking water for downstream communities. Trout Unlimited works with local stakeholders and communities to build collaborative support for public lands protections for these valuable lands, and we ask committee members to consider our views on the following bills:

**S. 342 - Pine Forest Range Recreation Enhancement Act of 2013**

Trout Unlimited strongly supports the Pine Forest Range Recreation Enhancement Act, the result of the collaborative efforts of the Pine Forest Working Group, a group of local citizens from northern Nevada. S. 342 would create a new 26,000-acre Wilderness area in the northwestern part of the state from two existing Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) through a unique series of land exchanges and creative compromises.

The proposed Wilderness, which augments the Blue Lakes WSA but releases 1,000 acres of the Alder Creek WSA for multiple use management, would conserve an area of Nevada that provides some of the best hunting and fishing opportunities in the state. Mule deer, pronghorn antelope and California bighorn sheep thrive in this high elevation landscape, which also provides habitat for sage grouse, chukar partridge and valley quail. Three fishable lakes, the Blue Lakes complex and both Onion Valley and Knott Creek reservoirs, are destinations for thousands of anglers that visit each summer and fall.

**S. 241 - Rio Grande del Norte National Conservation Area Establishment Act**

On March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013, President Obama designated approximately 240,000 acres northwest of Taos, New Mexico as a National Monument. This designation will preserve opportunities to hike, fish and hunt in this wild place, which is home to large elk and antelope herds as well as a first rate trout fishery. New Mexico's hunters spend more than \$150 million each year on this sport, and the state's anglers spend another \$176 million. Together, fishing and hunting supports some 8,000 New Mexico jobs.

Trout Unlimited supports legislation to designate certain areas within the Monument as Wilderness, a level of protection not afforded by the Presidential declaration. The entire landscape is of incredibly high value to sportsmen and outdoor enthusiasts, but this legislation will ensure that the area's highest quality habitat—the Cerro del Yuta Wilderness and the Rio San Antonio Wilderness--will receive the proper level of permanent protection.

### **S. 255 - North Fork Watershed Protection Act**

Trout Unlimited supports the North Fork Watershed Protection Act, which will withdraw US Forest Service land in the North Fork of the Flathead River's watershed from future mineral leasing activities. Protecting this watershed will maintain the pristine quality of Flathead Lake, the largest natural freshwater lake in the West and, and an important part of Montana's recreation economy. Public lands in this watershed provide unique opportunities to access our nation's rich natural heritage. The watershed provides critical habitat for bull and cutthroat trout, and a diverse array of wildlife.

The North Fork Watershed Protection Act is an important step in ensuring that traditional land uses such as timber and outdoor recreation are protected in this valley. Oil, gas and hard rock mineral extraction in the North Fork would forever change this special place and cause serious harm to water and air quality, native trout, and big game populations. That means big business in Montana, where hunters and anglers contribute \$1 billion annually to the state economy. The Act also satisfies a Memorandum of Understanding between the State of Montana and the Canadian Province of British Columbia, in which British Columbia has already moved to withdraw its portion of the watershed from oil and gas development.

### **S. 340 – Southeast Alaska Native Land Entitlement Finalization and Jobs Protection Act**

Trout Unlimited opposes S. 340 as Sealaska Corporation's outstanding land claim can be resolved without new legislation, and the bill would cause undue harm to important fish and wildlife habitat. Commercial, sport and subsistence fishing accounts for 7,200 jobs, more than 10 percent of all regional employment, and contributes \$986 million annually to the regional economy. If this bill is enacted, it will privatize various watersheds—particularly within the Keete and North Kuiu selections—that are important salmon-producing areas and help support the region's fishing industries. Additionally, lands transferred to Sealaska Corporation under the bill will have important protections removed that are crucial to ensuring development activities are conducted with less of an impact to salmon and trout habitat, such as the requirement for 100-foot buffers of no logging around salmon streams. While the bill provides for 100-foot easements around three individual salmon streams, other lands to be transferred pursuant to the bill contain numerous other salmon streams that warrant the protection afforded by federal safeguards.

Finally, while we support finalization of Sealaska Corporation's outstanding entitlement under existing law, this new legislation is unnecessary and leaves open the potential for additional, new claims by other Alaska Native corporations.

### **S. 159 – Lyon Country Economic Development and Conservation Act**

Trout Unlimited supports S. 159, which would designate the Wovoka Wilderness in the Pine Grove Hills of Lyon County Nevada and convey certain lands to the City of Yerington, NV to facilitate resource development. The proposed Wovoka Wilderness area supports a key winter range for interstate mule deer from California, important intact year-round sage grouse habitat, and an excellent trout fishery where the East Fork of the Walker River borders the proposed Wilderness boundary. With population growth along the Sierra front and the associated activities paralleling that human expansion, protection of these important remaining habitats is a wise investment for not only our wildlife resources, but those who live and recreate in northern Nevada. Trout Unlimited supports the local process and outcome that resulted in this proposal which protects habitat while providing for resource development.

### **S. 341 – San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act**

Trout Unlimited supports the San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act, which would protect more than 60,000 acres of prime big game habitat and trout river headwaters in San Miguel, Ouray, and San Juan Counties in Colorado. The Act would protect additions to existing wilderness areas as well as some of the last remaining large tracts of undisturbed wild lands in the three counties. This proposal has received overwhelming support from the county governments, surrounding towns, regional businesses, adjacent landowners and homeowners associations, as well as local citizens and of course, hunters and anglers.

### **S. 378 - Reauthorization of Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act**

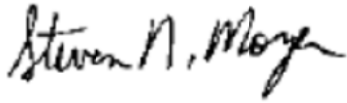
Trout Unlimited supports the reauthorization of FLTFA, a common-sense lands tool that achieves economic and environmental goals. Through FLTFA's "land for land" concept, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) sells lands identified for disposal, generating revenue for high-value federal land acquisition from willing sellers in the West. Through this balanced approach, the BLM has more capacity to sell land to private land owners, counties, companies and others for ranching, community development, businesses and various projects while simultaneously providing high value fish and game habitat to the public.

### **S. 27 – Hill Creek Cultural Preservation and Energy Development Act**

Trout Unlimited supports the Hill Creek Cultural Preservation and Energy Development Act as it strikes a balance between the needs of responsibly developing our domestic sources of energy and protecting critical cultural and ecological areas. By exchanging mineral rights in areas that are suitable for energy development with those found in areas that are more suited for conservation, this bill shows that oil and gas development, Native American concerns, and fish and wildlife habitat are not mutually exclusive. The Hill Creek and Book Cliff Areas are renowned their quality elk and mule deer populations, and consistently produce some of the largest trophy animals in the state. Simultaneously, native Colorado River Cutthroat trout swim

in the area's state-recognized Blue Ribbon waters. Keeping those places like they are today not only protects important tribal needs, but also sustains the quality habitat that supports the area's outstanding hunting and fishing values.

Thank you for considering our positions on these important public lands bills.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven N. Moyer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Steve Moyer  
Vice President for Government Affairs  
Trout Unlimited