



**Statement of The Pew Charitable Trusts
Regarding S. 1254, S. 1634, S. 1776, S. 1890, and S.1348
Submitted to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
For the Record of the Business Meeting Held on December 14, 2023**

The Pew Charitable Trusts' US Conservation work seeks to sustain biodiversity and resilient ecosystems by collaborating with policymakers, communities and businesses, Tribes, and many others. Pew supports S. 1254, S. 1776, S. 1890, and S. 1634 and urges Members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to approve these bills. We oppose S. 1348 due to the provisions in Section 7. Pew's more detailed positions on each proposal follows.

Pew supports S. 1254, the Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. This bill would permanently conserve 126,661 acres as wilderness and add 19 rivers to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System on Washington's Olympic Peninsula. Specifically, the measure would: protect sources of clean drinking water and critical salmon and steelhead habitat; preserve and expand access and opportunities for world-class hiking, camping, boating, hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation; create new economic opportunities for the Olympic peninsula while protecting existing timber jobs.

This carefully balanced, community-driven compromise legislation is the result of a multi-year public process featuring extensive local input, including feedback from the timber industry, timber communities, and hundreds of meetings with stakeholders in every community on the Peninsula. The proposal would permanently protect the best of the Olympic Peninsula's spectacular public landscapes and preserve timber jobs and recreational access.

S. 1245 has broad and enthusiastic public support, with endorsements by more than 800 Olympic Peninsula and Hood Canal region businesses, Tribes, CEOs, farms, conservation and recreation organizations, local elected officials, and religious and community leaders. Some of the Peninsula's largest employers—including Taylor Shellfish Farms, Sequim Holiday Inn Express and Suites, Ocean Gold Seafoods, and others—strongly support the legislation, as they depend on this area to attract and retain residents and to and to grow the local economy. The bill has also been endorsed by more than 75 local and regional outdoor recreation businesses and organizations.

Pew supports S. 1776, the Protecting Unique and Beautiful Landscapes by Investing in California (PUBLIC) Lands Act. The PUBLIC Lands Act conserves approximately one million acres of land and nearly 600 miles of river throughout California, from the majestic old-growth

forests and wild rivers of Northwest California, to the oak woodlands and lush and ecologically sensitive mountains of the Central Coast, to the majestic peaks and free-flowing waterways that serve as a backyard for more than 17 million Southern Californians. The bill will protect wildlife, enhance recreational opportunities, strengthen local economies, and establish new wildfire management procedures to enhance forest resiliency and allow for better coordination within fire management plans.

S. 1776 includes provisions from three bills that have previously been passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on multiple occasions with bipartisan support: The Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act (H.R. 3700), the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act (H.R. 2545), and the San Gabriel Mountains Protection Act (H.R. 3681). Each of these titles is the result of years of discussion and negotiation involving local businesses, elected officials, conservationists, and other stakeholders interested in preserving these wild lands and rivers.

Pew supports S. 1890, the Malheur Community Empowerment for the Owyhee Act. This bill will designate more than 1.1 million acres of wilderness in Oregon; move more than 21,000 acres of federal land into trust for the Burns Paiute Tribe; implement a flexible grazing management program intended to improve the ecological health of public lands; and support economic development and recreational opportunities in Malheur County.

The Owyhee Canyonlands in Oregon encompass over two million acres of wilderness quality lands, spectacular canyons, rich human history, huge expanses of intact habitat for imperiled species like the greater sage-grouse, and unparalleled opportunities for solitude and recreation. It is also a vulnerable landscape, threatened by global temperature changes, invasive species, mining, and other industrial development that increasingly undermine the ecological integrity and wilderness values across the landscape.

Efforts to conserve the Owyhee Canyonlands have been ongoing for decades. The Malheur Community Empowerment for the Owyhee Act is the result of collaborative discussions and negotiations involving local ranchers, communities, policymakers, Tribes, and sporting, recreation, and conservation groups. S. 1890 is the result of significant progress over the past three years to secure balanced conservation and management of federal lands within Malheur County.

Pew supports S. 1634, The Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act. This bill would protect public lands in Colorado through wilderness and special management area designations in places like Mount Sneffels, Hoosier Ridge, and the Tenmile Range; mineral withdrawals in the Thompson Divide; and important wildlife conservation areas such as the Porcupine Gulch Wildlife Conservation Area, which includes Colorado's only migration corridor over Interstate 70 that provides safe passage for elk, bear, mule deer, and other wildlife.

S. 1634 builds upon President Biden's 2022 Proclamation establishing the Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument. Both efforts to conserve these landscapes reflect years

of coordination with hikers, campers, ranchers, sportsmen, elected officials, recreation groups, counties, local businesses, and energy companies. These individuals and groups came together to achieve consensus on appropriate, balanced protections for the region, and to develop a program to support local communities through leasing and energy generation from the excess methane emitted from existing and abandoned coal mines in the North Fork Valley.

Pew opposes S. 1348, the Wyoming Public Lands Initiative Act of 2023. The primary purpose of this legislation is to redesignate land within certain wilderness study areas in the State of Wyoming. Section 7 of S. 1348 would prevent the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) proposed *Conservation and Landscape Health Rule* (88 Fed. Reg. 19583), or any substantially similar rule, from applying to any Bureau-managed land in Wyoming. The BLM oversees more than 18 million acres of federally-owned lands in the state and is required by Congress—under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act—to manage landscapes under its jurisdiction for *multiple-use/sustained-yield*.

A final rule would improve the resilience capacity of ecosystems to the impacts of increasing biodiversity loss, rising temperatures, drought, and wildfires by enabling the BLM to improve the balance between the conservation of important wildlife habitat and intact landscapes with other uses. Pew, therefore, opposes language in S.1348 that would exempt BLM lands in Wyoming from a final *Conservation and Landscape Health Rule*.

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