

August 3, 2006

The Honorable Judd Gregg
The Honorable John Sununu
The Honorable Charles Bass
The Honorable Jeb Bradley

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for introducing legislation to expand Congressionally-designated Wilderness in the White Mountain National Forest. We support your efforts to establish a new Wild River Wilderness and to expand the existing Sandwich Range Wilderness as proposed in the new *WMNF Land and Resource Management Plan*.

We appreciate the extensive work the U.S. Forest Service put into developing this new management plan for the WMNF. The planning process was based on significant scientific data, it actively sought public involvement and it considered the views of thousands of forest users. The new management plan was broadly supported by citizens, conservation organizations, communities and governmental agencies in New Hampshire. The WMNF provides a range of benefits from multiple-use forest management, including timber harvesting, ecological protection, and a spectrum of recreational opportunities. Congressional action to permanently designate more Wilderness in New Hampshire is a very important step in implementation of the overall management plan and would provide many benefits to our state and to the more than 6 million annual visitors to the WMNF.

Our state is renowned for forests that provide world-class opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, backpacking, skiing, wildlife viewing and just relaxing in the solitude of a natural landscape. Visitors seeking these experiences bring millions of dollars each year to communities and towns throughout the state. The wild areas of the National Forest are major attractions of the White Mountain region, providing backcountry recreational opportunities found in few other places in the northeast.

Wilderness is an important component of a balanced and sustainable landscape. However, in the northeastern United States, the most heavily settled part of our country; it is a rare and precious feature. The twelve northeastern states contain 6% of the nation's land area and over 21% of its population, but less than 0.3% of currently designated Wilderness. These areas provide a wide range of important natural and cultural values, including opportunities for remote backcountry recreation, solitude and spiritual renewal, and the restoration of critical old-growth forest habitat. These values are especially important in our region because of their scarcity.

As the population of New Hampshire grows, permanently protecting wild areas in the White Mountain National Forest now is a critical safeguard for our quality-of-life and the unique opportunities and natural values of Wilderness areas.

Thank you for supporting new Wilderness in New Hampshire.

Sincerely,

Jane Difley
President/Forester
Society for the Protection of New
Hampshire Forests

Andy Falender
Executive Director
Appalachian Mountain Club

Leanne Klyza-Linck
Eastern Forest Senior Associate
The Wilderness Society

Fred Lavigne
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Martha Hill
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Ted Sutton
Chair
Forests Committee, North Country
Council (includes 32 towns)

Ray Burton
Councilor, First District

Charles Niebling
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