

CONGRESSMAN'S REPORT
by Morris K. Udall

THE WILDERNESS BILL

We who live in Arizona enjoy a great abundance of nature's beauty--in our mountains and desert, pine forests and saguaro forests, rivers, streams, washes and canyons. Nature has blessed Arizona with as great a variety of scenic beauty as one can find on the North American continent.

Because we have so much natural beauty around us we should have a special interest in a bill which will come before the House of Representatives in January. Known as the Wilderness Bill, this measure proposes to establish a national wilderness preservation system, setting aside large areas of our wildlands to be retained in their natural state for present and future generations.

Confined to lands already owned by the federal government, and limited by provisions protecting existing mining, timber, oil, grazing and recreation interests, the bill was passed by the Senate in September by a vote of 78 to 8. After 13 years of study and five years of congressional hearings, drafts and re-drafts, the bill has a good chance of gaining final passage in 1962.

What is the Wilderness Bill, and why is it necessary: An answer was given in 1949 in a report prepared by the Library of Congress:

"In recent years there has been an increasing awareness by the Government and the people of the United States of the many problems of land use. With the growing population and the resulting utilization of more and more previously unutilized land, it is becoming evident that before many years have passed there is danger that the original wilderness which was met and conquered by our forefathers in building our country will have disappeared entirely. It will exist only in the history books. If, then, there is reason for preserving substantial portions of the remaining wilderness, it must be decided upon before it is too late."

More than seven years of study, conferences and adjustment of views followed that report. Then, in March 1957, the first major Wilderness Bill was introduced. Hearings were conducted in that year and in succeeding years. The bill passed by the Senate, S. 174, was introduced in the Congress last January. More than 180 organizations and individuals were heard from in the hearings which followed. Whether the Congress finally passes this bill or another version, the need for some such legislation is becoming increasingly apparent.

Untrammeled by Man

What is meant by "wilderness"? The Senate bill defines the term this way: "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

It is further defined as an area "retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation," an area which "generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's works substantially unnoticeable" and a place which has "outstanding opportunities for solitude."

Opponents of the Wilderness Bill have questioned the setting aside of any area so remote from roads and facilities that few persons can enjoy them, or the preserving of "moose for the sake of the moose." Proponents have said that we have a duty to future generations to preserve some of the natural beauty of America before it is gone forever. Already the Senate has cast its lot overwhelmingly with those who recognize this obligation.

What Is Involved?

It is important that the people of Arizona understand what the Wilderness Bill is, for Arizona ranks third behind Alaska and California among all the states in the amount of land affected by the bill.

The Wilderness Bill is confined to presently-held federal lands. It does not propose to go out and acquire new lands not now in federal ownership. In addition, the bill has provisions to protect existing recreational, mining, lumbering, grazing, and other legitimate uses. The Wilderness Bill involves the last land areas in our country still free from the encroachments of motels, resorts, neon signs, roads, automobiles, hamburger stands, beer cans, bottles and cigarette butts. When enemies of wilderness preservation speak about the need to use these lands to bolster western economies, let us imagine what kind of a country this would be if there were no escaping such omnipresent manifestations of "civilization".

Like the New Yorker who may never see the Grand Canyon but feels somehow happier merely knowing it is there, all Americans can derive satisfaction, I believe, knowing that there are places in our country to which they can go to find peace and solitude away from the "imprint of man's works".

But what about our national forests and parks--what is to become of them? The answer is that they will continue as before. Here there will continue to be roads, resort facilities, the use of motor boats and airplanes, and all the other activities that have become a part of recreation in these areas. The Wilderness Bill merely sets aside certain undeveloped, wild areas for perpetuation in their natural state.

Effects In Arizona

A look at the land areas involved in Arizona will give an idea of what the bill encompasses and how it relates to the national forests and parks. The state of Arizona comprises 72,688,000 acres of land, of which 32,396,000 acres, or 44.6 percent, are under federal ownership in the form of national forests, parks and the like, and 19,383,000 acres, or 26.7 percent, are under federal management on behalf of the various Indian tribes. Thus, 71.3 percent of our state is owned or managed by the federal government. The Wilderness Bill would neither add to nor reduce this

area. Rather, it would set aside a maximum of 3,661,347 acres presently under federal ownership, an area representing five percent of the state, to be part of the wilderness system.

The wilderness area would be made up of land presently classified as "wilderness", "wild", or "primitive". In Arizona the proposed wilderness system would encompass the following areas presently classified as "wilderness": 205,000 acres in the Mazatzal Mountains northeast of Roosevelt Dam; 124,140 acres in Superstition Mountains near Apache Junction. Also, the following areas now classified as "wild" would be included: 18,000 acres in Chiricahua Mountains north of Douglas; 55,000 acres in Galiuro Mountains northeast of Tucson; and 20,850 acres in Sierra Ancha Mountains northeast of Roosevelt Dam. Finally, these areas now classified as "primitive": 180,139 acres in the Blue Range east of Hannagan Meadows on the New Mexico border; 7,400 acres in Mount Baldy area southeast of McNary in the White Mountains; 45,952 acres along Sycamore Canyon between Flagstaff and Prescott; and 17,430 in the Pine Mountains.

As specified in the bill, the "primitive" areas will go into the wilderness system but would be subject to review in the next 10 years. Only those "primitive" areas of predominant wilderness value would be left in the system.

While the purpose of the bill is to protect natural areas from possible intrusion by commercial interests, any area can be removed from the wilderness system if the President and Congress find a greater public interest would be served by its removal.

In addition to the forest lands, which are under jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture, the Wilderness Bill provides for the possible inclusion of certain roadless lands under control of the Department of Interior. In Arizona these lands include 1,485,117 acres in national parks and monuments and 1,596,428 acres in national wildlife refuges and game areas. Portions of these areas would be made part of the wilderness system only if the President and the Congress agreed that their inclusion was in the best interest of the nation.

In the wilderness system existing rights and established uses would be maintained, but otherwise there would be no commercial enterprises, roads or use of motor vehicles, motor boats, or aircraft. However, guides could continue to furnish their services, and grazing of livestock, where well established, could continue.

Finally, the President could authorize prospecting, mining, reservoirs, water conservation works, transmission lines or essential roads wherever he determined such a use would better serve the public interest than denial of these facilities.

The present jurisdiction of states with respect to fish and wildlife would continue as before. Prospecting, for the purpose of gathering information about mineral or water resources, would be permitted. State water laws would not be affected.

A Precious Resource

Prepared by Senators and Congressmen largely from the western states, the Wilderness Bill is tremendously important to the West. As Senator Frank Church of Idaho has said, "It is in the

West alone that a person can still escape the clutter of roads, signposts, and managed picnic grounds. The vanishing wilderness is yet a part of our western heritage. We westerners have known the wilds during our lifetimes, and we must see to it that our grandchildren are not denied the same rich experience during theirs."

We occasionally talk of our country's "spiritual resources". The traditions of our founding fathers are, in fact, a resource more precious than our oil fields, mineral deposits or topsoil. In the same sense, our wilderness, too, is a resource with a decidedly "spiritual" quality. I believe we have an obligation to preserve some of it. Our failure to do so would not enrich us but would make our grandchildren poorer.