

Route 4, Box 33  
Santa Fe, N. M.

1 March 1962

The Honorable Thomas G. Morris  
Interior and Insular Affairs Committee  
House Office Building  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Morris:

Thank you for your answer of February 19 to my letter about the Wilderness Bill.

I am not sure what you mean by protecting "the mining, grazing, petroleum and any other domestic industry using the land." As you must know the bill proposes to set aside as wilderness, for present and future enjoyment by the people, only a very small percentage of the public domain, and only that part of it which is not now being used by industry of any kind. It is paradoxical to speak of using or exploiting wilderness areas. The very nature of wilderness resides in its wildness; when it is used it is no longer wilderness. A purpose in setting aside wilderness areas is, among others, to secure the spiritual health of our society by providing regions where people can go on foot or on horseback to escape for a time the noises and pressures of our industrial civilization - literally, to recreate themselves both physically and spiritually. Maybe you are one who does not particularly enjoy the out-of-doors, has not experienced this benefit and, therefore, does not believe in the validity of this point of view. But there are, I can assure you, many people in public as well as in private life who have testified to its truth.

Probably more people favor the Wilderness Bill than oppose it but I doubt they represent the greater economic interest. However, it is not just material profits that should be considered. I do not believe that you would want to be known as a Representative who is more sensitive to the pressure of money of a minority than to the welfare and happiness of the majority. In this case, by the very nature of its make-up, the majority is not as well organized nor as vocal as the minority simply because it is not so well financed. The latter group is working for its immediate, selfish interests whereas the former seeks no personal material gain and is concerned with the future welfare of the Nation.

I hope you will seriously consider the point of view I have tried to present when the Wilderness Bill is under discussion.

Yours respectfully,

Eliot F. Porter