

Oregonians are members of the Pacific Northwest Chapter, one of the largest and oldest non-California chapters of the Club.

The Sierra Club has had a long history of active concern for the wilderness and scenic qualities of the Oregon Cascades in general and the Mount Jefferson Area in particular. Beginning in 1959, we have supported successive proposals of Oregon conservationists for a study of the scenic and natural features of the Oregon Cascades by the National Park Service. We have supported over the years proposals by Oregon conservationists for wilderness classification of portions of the Oregon Cascades, and have protested actions of the Forest Service which have resulted in losses of the opportunities for a wilderness recreation experience losses which we consider to be excessive. In 1962, 1964, and 1966, we supported the recommendation of Oregon conservationists for a substantial enlargement of the Mount Jefferson Primitive Area and its reclassification into Wilderness status. Representatives of the Sierra Club have appeared and testified on its behalf in support of these recommendations at the hearings held in 1964 and 1966 on the subject of the reclassification of the Mount Jefferson Primitive Area.

Our position today on the proposal for reclassification of the Mount Jefferson Primitive Area into a Mount Jefferson Wilderness is essentially the same as it was when we appeared before the Forest Service at its hearings in Salem, Oregon in 1966. We believe that the maintenance of lands in their primeval untouched state is a matter of great cultural value and importance not only to the people of Oregon, but also to the nation. We have become increasingly alarmed at the rate loss of wilderness and opportunities for a wilderness recreation experience in the State of Oregon. We believe also that the protection and maintenance of substantial portions of lowland old growth Northwest forest is also a matter of great importance to the nation, particularly in view of the continuing program of state, private, and federal agencies charged with the management of our timber resources to eliminate such old growth stands and "return the land to production", as they put it. We do not question this aim for most of our timber lands, but we do believe that our old growth forests must be managed to serve social as well as economic values. We are particularly alarmed at the loss of such lowland old growth forests in the State of Oregon, and see some of the forest lands surrounding the Mount Jefferson Primitive Area as offering what may be the last major opportunity in Oregon for preservation of this resource. We see wilderness and scenic beauty as natural resources coming from the land, and of increasing importance in a nation that is already 70 per cent urban.

It is against this background of concern, and for these reasons, that we are in support of a proposal of Oregon conservationists to add some 30,000 acres to that area of land proposed by S. 2751 to be established as the Mount Jefferson Wilderness. We are wholeheartedly in support of S. 2751 and feel that it has many commendable features. It is a substantial step forward in the right direction, towards assuring that the State of Oregon will have in the years to come a significant wilderness resource. However, we believe that it is necessary to place under the protection of the Wilderness Act all of the lands surrounding the present Mount Jefferson Primitive Area which qualify for a Wilderness status.

Briefly, we urge the addition of the following lands to the Mount Jefferson Wilderness as proposed in S. 2751:

1. The valley of the North Fork of the Breitenbush. This is the area labeled "A" on the attached map. It is a two mile slope containing numerous lakes, ponds, meadows, and small streams; the valley is in a wilderness primeval forest. The skyline road to the north forms a suitable physical boundry along the north valley wall at an elevation of about 4,400 feet. The unroaded portion of the North Fork of the Breitenbush is still a wilderness valley and represents an opportunity to preserve a portion of what all Oregon once looked like.

2. Firecamp Lake and the valley of the South Fork of the Breitenbush. The lakes area is a high elevation plateau, too fragile to sustain the impact of heavy roadside recreational use. One of the two Firecamp Lakes is included within the S. 2751 proposal for Wilderness, but not the other. The Forest Service plans to build a road to this other lake. The lakes are cradled in a small three-sided basin, formed by an especially scenic ridge. The lakes offer a fine view of Mount Jefferson and are an integral part of the wilderness and a physical part of the mountain itself. The South Fork of the Breitenbush was invaded by logging roads after the primitive area was first being considered for reclassification as wilderness. We recommend that the wilderness boundary bend around the end of the existing road, proceed downstream, and the over the western upper slope of Triangulation Peak. The enclosed area contains numerous streams, scenic and