

It was disappointing to me, though, in that you did not associate the general policies with the precise and peculiar individuality of the Absaroka Range. It was not for lack of knowledge; for you know this area well.

You describe the Crest Zone as the high mountain country above and immediately below timberline, speak of the "highly erodable soils and run-off from snowmelt and heavy summer rainstorms" and say that "timber cutting will not be done in the Crest Zone." As of course you well know, the crest of the Absarokas is entirely above timber, high barren plateaus from 10,000 to almost 13,000 feet. From these drop abruptly spectacular cliffs, running for miles nearly vertical and up to 2000 feet high. Timberline begins, on extremely erodable soils, at the foot of the cliffs. The altitude is low enough (8000 to 9000 feet) so the highest trees are of fairly good size, bigger at least than the ordinary idea of timberline trees. The Forest Service calls them "merchantable" (apparently that means "anything big enough for a fence post, or a 2x4, or to be chewed up for particle board").

Now, this fringe timber has not been protected. On the slopes of Ramshorn, on the slopes of Elkhorn Ridge, on Cartridge Creek, on the south and west slopes of Pinnacles, cutting has been done right up to the base of the cliffs, clean cutting, leaving no protection on the soil; and the erosion on this fragile volcanic ash is already very considerable.

Unless they are included in Wilderness area, what assurance do we have that the same thing will not happen on the high slopes up Wiggins Fork presently in the Stratified Primitive Area, on the west slopes of Ramshorn, all along the cliffs of DuNoir Butte, on the east slopes of Pinnacles, and the slopes above Bear Basin (all the areas of the upper DuNoir and Wiggins Fork and Bear Creek requested in Senator McGee's amendment to the Washakie Wilderness Bill)?

The two Fremont County newspapers both quote Senator Hansen as saying at the hearing on the Washakie Wilderness Bill: "The Forest Service has gone to great lengths to insure the availability of future timber supplies so that this important industry will remain alive." There is nothing that would make a lot of Fremont County citizens happier than to be convinced that this is true.

What we would like would be a guided tour; or an article illustrated with good photographs with such captions as: "Healthy New Growth in the Sheridan Creek Clean-cut Area"; or, "Progress of Reforestation on the Jakey's Fork Burn Scar"; or, "Wiggins Fork Prepares for the Next Round in the Cutting Cycle".

This is, of course, sad irony. Because, seventeen years after cutting was over, there is very little new timber growth on the Sheridan Creek clean-cut area; thirty-four years after the Jakey's Fork fire the great scar on Whisky Mountain is still bare; four years after cutting on Wiggins Fork, it looks like a disaster area.

What I hope is that when you read this you will say, "I just wish Mary Back could see the healthy new growth on the X Creek clean-cut area; and the progress of reforestation on the Y Creek burn scar; and how Z Creek is preparing for the next round of the cutting cycle."

Please, Phil, let us know the names and locations of X, Y, and Z Creeks!

Sincerely yours,

MARY BACK.

POMONA, CALIF.

To Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs:

Do hope you will make every possible effort in favor of Senator Thomas H. Kuchel's S. 2531 designating the San Gabriel Wilderness as a permanent addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Yours in seeking the preservation of our priceless natural treasures for the enjoyment of posterity.

W. C. ATKINS.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF., February 21, 1968.

Senator FRANK CHURCH,
Chairman, Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands,
Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C.

DEAR SIR: We are hoping for your support for the proposed Mt. Jefferson Wilderness Area and the proposed addition to it as recommended by the Forest Service.