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Earth Day Turns 50 on April 22

Mount Rainier National Park, Washington

A half-century ago, on April 22, 1970, Earth Day erupted into the national consciousness, bringing unprecedented attention to the importance of protecting the planet that sustains us. More than just a one-day demonstration, that first Earth Day awakened a sense of urgency about the health of our environment and ignited a demand for change that altered the course of history.

Former Wilderness Society leader Gaylord Nelson conceived the idea for a national day to focus on the environment while he was serving as a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin. Under his leadership, 20 million Americans took

Earth Day 2020 gives us an opportunity to generate bold action on climate and leave an impact as powerful and enduring as Earth Day 1970.

to the streets to voice their disgust over dirty air and water and to demand a new set of priorities for a livable planet.

Earth Day changed the world. It motivated political leaders of every stripe to work together to pass 28 critical environmental laws in the decade that followed, including

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Dear Public Lands Champion,

The science is clear. Climate change and widespread species loss are unfolding much more rapidly than expected. Inspired by the movement sparked by the first Earth Day 50 years ago, now is the time to press our leaders to act.

Here in the United States, the public lands you love—and have worked so hard to protect—provide important opportunities to decisively address the climate and extinction crises.

But to seize these opportunities, we must come together. We must listen to and work with the communities that are bearing the worst impacts of the climate crisis. We must identify and protect the most important wildlands to help nature and communities adapt. And we must replace fossil fuel development on public lands with carefully sited, clean, renewable energy.

Because of you—and shoulder-to-shoulder with you—we will help our nation harness the full potential of public lands to ensure a livable world for future generations.

Thank you for your vision, foresight and generosity!

Jamie Williams
President



Headwaters Forest Reserve, California © Bob Wick, BLM

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PRESIDENT:
Jamie Williams

DESIGN:
Owen Design Co.

Questions or comments?
Please contact
Carolyn Stevens at
carolyn_stevens@tw.society



The Wilderness Society meets all standards as set forth by the Better Business Bureau/Wise Giving Alliance.

bbb.org/charity

the Clean Air, Clean Water and Endangered Species Acts. These landmark laws inspired other nations to take similar steps to address their environmental problems. Earth Day is now observed globally by more than a billion people in 193 countries each year.

While substantial progress has been made since 1970, assaults on the hard-won environmental laws protecting our air, water, wildlife and land continue. In addition, humanity is challenged to confront the new crises of climate change and accelerating species loss. Fortunately, the way in which we manage public lands can have a big impact on both challenges.

By transitioning away from extraction of coal, oil and natural gas on public lands in favor of renewable energy, we can reduce national greenhouse gas emissions (the prime driver of climate change) by more than 20 percent. In addition, public lands have the potential to be an essential safeguard against the worst impacts of these crises because they provide both vital habitat in

which wildlife and natural systems can thrive, and most critically, they contain some of the most productive carbon-trapping forests on Earth.



Make Earth Day Every Day with a Monthly Gift!

Become a **Friend of Wilderness** and your tax-deductible monthly donations will protect and preserve wilderness all year long!

Visit wilderness.org/monthly to sign up today.

Thanks to you, The Wilderness Society is working to make sure large, interconnected wildlands are protected, defended and part of the solution to the problems we face.

Whether you took part in the first Earth Day 50 years ago, or you are new to the modern environmental movement it inspired, all of us have a role to play right now. Earth Day 2020 gives us an opportunity to generate bold action on climate and leave an impact as powerful and enduring as Earth Day 1970.

Looking back on 50 years of Earth Day, we are proud of the landmark laws put in place to address our biggest environmental issues. Together, we will continue to defend these bedrock laws against any threat.



© Carla Ruas

The Forests You Save Will Help Save Us

In the 1930s, the rapid growth of roads dissecting the nation's wild forests inspired a small group of scientists and conservationists to launch The Wilderness Society. Over the course of our 85-year history, many passionate individuals, including you, have followed in the footsteps of these conservation pioneers. Together we have worked to protect hundreds of millions of acres of wilderness, as well as beloved national forests, parks, wildlife refuges and monuments across America.

Now, the wildlands we have saved will help save us. Wild forests, in particular, offer some of humanity's best opportunities to slow two escalating crises: climate change and mass extinction. Forests provide essential habitat to thousands of species of animals and plants—so to the extent that we connect wild forests on a large scale, we will create opportunities for hundreds of species to migrate as their habitats change. And that freedom to move will help them survive. Forests also reduce harmful emissions by taking some of the carbon from the atmosphere and storing it.

The Wilderness Society is fighting against logging in the pristine, old-growth sections of the Tongass National Forest in Alaska.

© Howie Garber



© Mason Cummings



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Our work to protect forests nationwide is crucial to fighting the climate crisis and impending mass extinction. Pictured here are the Nantahala National Forest in North Carolina and the Santa Fe National Forest in New Mexico.

Every 15 to 20 years, a golden opportunity to protect the wildest places in a national forest comes when the U.S. Forest Service revises its management plan. Thanks to you, our scientists and conservation staff are partnering with key regional stakeholders to press for greater wildlands protection through this planning process for 30 national forests, including:

- The Nantahala and Pisgah in North Carolina, which together contain 240 miles of the Appalachian Trail;
- The Helena-Lewis and Clark in Montana, which is vital to keep wildlands connected in the “Crown of the Continent,” the largest area of intact wildlands in the lower 48 states;
- Sequoia, which has the largest concentration of giant sequoia groves in the world and contains the southern-most section of the Pacific Crest Trail in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

But the Trump administration has set its sights on U.S National Forests by entertaining a request from the state of Alaska to open currently protected wild portions of the Tongass National Forest to logging. If building roads and cutting timber in 9.2 million acres of ancient forest in the Tongass are permitted, a precedent will be set that threatens the wild heart of every national forest. Thanks to you, The Wilderness Society's regional conservationists in Alaska and our national forest defense team have organized and unleashed a major campaign to fight against logging the pristine, old-growth sections of the Tongass. We are fully prepared to take this fight to court if necessary.

The Trump administration is also trying to harm national forests by gutting the National Environmental Policy Act, a law that dates back to the Nixon administration. Known as NEPA, this important decision-making tool requires the U.S. government to disclose

the environmental impacts of development projects on federal public lands. Furthermore, it gives the public a voice in deciding whether logging, roadbuilding, oil and gas drilling, mining, power line construction and other projects should be allowed on lands that are meant to benefit everyone.

If finalized, the administration's proposed changes to NEPA will open the way for more destruction of the nation's natural heritage for the short-term gain of a few private logging, mining and oil and gas companies.

Your support enables our top-notch legal defense team to lead the court battle to keep NEPA intact and ensure that it continues to apply to all federal lands.

For more information on the fight to save America's wild national forests and additional actions you can take, please visit www.wilderness.org/forests.

Wilderness and You

Mason Cummings, photographer and videographer for The Wilderness Society, has spent years venturing deep into the wilderness and capturing images that inspire people to explore and protect America's wild public lands.

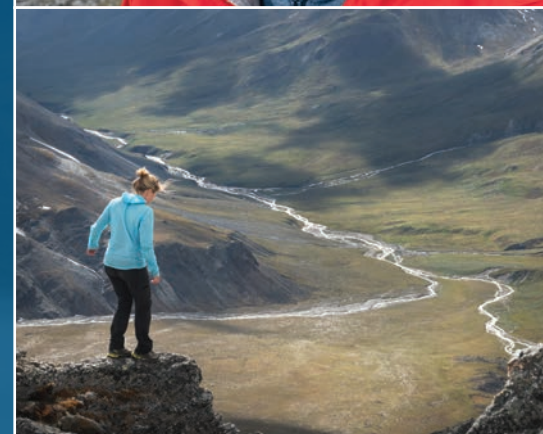
"I've taken my camera into many wild places in the lower 48 states, and I thought I knew what wilderness was," he says, adding, "then, I went to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge." There, in the heart of the Brooks Range, he found "a pristine wild landscape, far removed from human impact, and unparalleled in its beauty."

Accompanied by eight others on an expedition with the International League of Conservation Photographers, Mason spent 13 days hundreds of miles from any town or settlement, beneath a summer sun that never set. "Ascending through the fog to the sun-dappled ridge tops at 2 am, I took some of the best photographs of my life," Mason says.

"Being in the Arctic Refuge profoundly deepened my will to defend it," he concludes. "I want my photos to inspire others to join the decades old fight to permanently protect these vast, wild lands, especially now, when the pressure to carve it up and drill for oil is so intense."



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Your Support in Action

Through your fight for public lands, Your impact will endure

You are making important gains for public lands, even as the Trump administration works to open them to a radical expansion of coal, oil, natural gas, mineral and timber extraction. Thanks to you:

- 75% of court decisions in our cases since President Trump took office have gone in favor of public lands protection.
- We negotiated an out-of-court settlement resulting in the permanent retirement of one of the two remaining federal oil and gas leases in the Badger-Two Medicine area in Montana. Encompassing more than 130,000 acres of national forest land, the area is vital to connect wildlands, as well as being an important cultural landscape and home to many origin stories for our partners, the Blackfeet Nation.



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- Legislation to designate more than 75 percent of the 1.6 million-acre Desert National Wildlife Refuge in Nevada as wilderness has been introduced by Senator Catherine Cortez Masto. The Air Force was seeking control of more than half of the refuge to expand its 2.9 million-acre bombing and training range nearby. We are working to secure the bill's passage in 2020.

Kendall Edmo, a Blackfeet tribal member, and advocate for protecting the Badger-Two Medicine region.





The Wilderness Society
1615 M St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
www.wilderness.org
1-800-THE-WILD

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Denali National Park, Alaska

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Many people who are grateful for clean air and water, verdant fields and forests, and habitat for wildlife choose to ensure these precious wildlands are protected with a gift to The Wilderness Society in their will or estate plan.

giftplanning@twso.org

888-736-4897

wilderness.org/giftplanning

Sand to Snow National Monument, California

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