

Legislative History of the Wild Sky Wilderness Act

107th Congress (2001-2002)

(H.R. 4844; S. 2565)

May 29, 2002 - The bill was originally introduced on May 29, 2002 by Senator Murray (D-WA) and Representative Rick Larsen (D-WA02) followed by positive editorials from the Everett Herald and the Seattle Times. On June 6, Republican Representative Jennifer Dunn added her support to the proposal by cosponsoring the bill.

July 30, 2002 - The bill received a hearing in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests. Highlights of the hearing included testimony from Index mayor Kem Hunter in support of the proposal and comments from Republican Committee Chairman Larry Craig (R-ID) who said that the Wild Sky bill was “done the right way” (referring to the inclusive process initiated by Murray and Larsen).

September 12, 2002 – The bill passed unanimously out of the House Resources Committee led by Republican Chairman Jim Hansen (R-UT) without a hearing. The vote was particularly important because of the committee’s reputation of being wilderness unfriendly. The vote was followed by positive editorials in the Seattle Times and the Seattle Post Intelligencer.

October 3, 2002 – The bill passed out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on a bipartisan vote, clearing the bill for full (and final votes) in the House and Senate.

November 19, 2002 – The Wild Sky legislation was combined with a handful of other public land bills (including the University Lands bill) and passed the full Senate by unanimous consent.

November 22, 2002 - The House of Representatives adjourned before final House floor action on the bill. Senator Murray and Representative Larsen vowed to reintroduce the bill in both houses early next session.

108th Congress (2003-2004)

(H.R. 822; S. 391)

February 19, 2003 – Sen. Murray and Rep. Larsen simultaneously reintroduced companion bills in both the House and Senate. The reintroduction was greeted by positive editorial support from the Seattle Times, Seattle Post Intelligencer and the Everett Herald.

June 4, 2003 – The bill received a hearing in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests. Local Resident and activist Mike Town and Washington Wildlife Federation President Mark Heckert both testified in support of the bill. Two local Snohomish County residents testified in opposition. The Bush Administration testified that the Wild Sky Wilderness Act is a “good bill” and that the President would sign it if it passes Congress and is sent to his desk.

July 23, 2003 – The full Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee passed the bill by voice vote, clearing the bill for Senate floor consideration and final passage in that body.

November 24, 2003 – The bill passed the U.S. Senate on unanimous consent one day before the Senate adjourned for the holidays. Focus then turned to moving the bill through the House of Representatives during the second half of the 108th Congressional session.

July 8, 2004 – Sen. Murray, Representative Larsen and Representative George Nethercutt (R-WA05), after weeks of staff-level meetings, reached agreement on a bipartisan proposal that preserved 103,000 acres as designated Wilderness. Changes to the wilderness proposal included removal of the majority of private in-holdings from within the boundaries and removal of some roads and adjacent lands. Subsequently, Rep. Nethercutt decided to pursue another alternative and the Murray-Larsen-Nethercutt agreement was not introduced as legislation.

July 22, 2004 – The House Resources Subcommittee on Forest and Forest Health held a hearing on HR 822. Rep. Larsen testified in support of the bill. Undersecretary Mark Rey reaffirmed the administration’s support for the Wild Sky Wilderness Bill. Local resident and Friends of the Wild Sky President Mike Town and Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon

testified in support of the bill. Snohomish County Councilman Jeff Sax and two Snohomish County residents testified in opposition to the bill. The Washington State Snowmobile Association testified on their neutrality.

September 22, 2004 – The House Resources Committee scheduled consideration of HR 5083, an alternative bill introduced a few weeks earlier by Rep. George Nethercutt. The alternative bill created a brand-new “backcountry” designation for roughly 13,000 acres and called for specifics to be determined in a management plan within three years.. Sen. Murray, Rep. Larsen and the broad coalition of supporters of HR 822 opposed Rep. Nethercutt’s alternative because it failed to protect the lowland elevations in the proposed Wild Sky wilderness. Chairman Pombo pulled HR 5083 from consideration.

December 7, 2004 – House adjourned after “lame duck session” without further consideration of the Wild Sky bill, thus ending the 108th Congress. .

109th Congress (2005-2006)

(H.R. 851; S. 152)

January 24, 2005 – Senator Murray reintroduces the same version of the Wild Sky Wilderness Act which passed the Senate in the 108th Congress.

February 16, 2005 – The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee unanimously passes the Wild Sky Wilderness Act (S. 152) out of committee. Representative Larsen re-introduces the Senate-passed Wild Sky Wilderness bill with Representative Jay Inslee as an original cosponsor.

July 26, 2005 – The full Senate unanimously passes the Wild Sky Wilderness Act (S. 152), sending it to the House of Representatives. The passage marks the third time the legislation has cleared the U.S. Senate.

December 10, 2006 – House adjourned after “lame duck” session without further consideration of the Wild Sky Wilderness Act, thus ending the 109th Congress.

110th Congress (2007-2008)

(H.R. 886; S. 520)

February 7, 2007 – Senator Murray and Representative Larsen reintroduce the Wild Sky Wilderness Act of 2007. The 106,000-acre bill had no legislative changes and only technical adjustments to accommodate mapping areas and technical boundary changes.

March 7, 2007 – The House Natural Resources Committee, chaired by Representative Nick Rahall (D-WV), approved and reported the House bill out of the full committee on a voice vote. The bill had not been considered under the previous committee chairman, Representative Richard Pombo (R-CA) during the past four years.

April 17, 2007 – The full House unanimously passes the Wild Sky Wilderness Act (HR 886), sending it to the U.S. Senate for further consideration. The passage marks the first time the legislation has cleared the U.S. House of Representatives.

June 28, 2007 – The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee unanimously passes the Wild Sky Wilderness Act (S. 520) out of committee.

April 10, 2008 – The full Senate passes the Wild Sky Wilderness Act as part of a package (S. 2739) of more than 60 other bills that had all been subject to a nearly year-long hold by Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) for non substantive reasons. The package passed by a vote of 91-4. All of the bills in the package had already passed the House and had not been changed by the Senate. The event marked the fourth time the bill had passed the Senate and the first time it has passed the House and the Senate in the same Congressional session.

April 29, 2008 – The Full House passed the omnibus package (S. 2739) of bills including the Wild Sky Wilderness Act by a vote of 291-117. The vote ended a nearly 6-year Congressional campaign and sent the legislation to the President’s desk to be signed into law.

May 8, 2008 – President Bush signed the omnibus package (S. 2739) of bills including the Wild Sky Wilderness Act as Public Law 110-229.