

Letter to Congressman Issa from Thomas Firth

To: [beautymountain@mail.house.gov](mailto:beautymountain@mail.house.gov)

Dear Congressman Issa,

I am writing you in regard to my opposition to expanding the Beauty Mountain Wilderness area in San Diego county. I'll try to be brief:

1. More wilderness denies access to the vast majority. The rebuttal, "hunting will still be allowed" is a joke, and since the majority of hunters are not only older (baby-boomers) they are also responsible off-roaders and use their jeeps to access the areas multitude of mining roads and trails (paid for with taxpayer dollars). These folks are also registered voters. Wilderness designation simply means access will be limited to the young, fit, granola-eating few, and since water is limited and at a premium in this area, ample supplies are difficult to carry, so basically there will be no access.
2. This area has traditionally been a multi-use area.
3. A disturbing amount of private land in this area has been bought up by nature conservancies and turned over to BLM for management. This practice is currently being investigated as a possible violation of the RICO Act, not to mention it's elimination for multiple-use stipulated by contract with the BLM.
4. Most of this area simple doesn't fit "wilderness" criteria. The area is laced with old mining roads, trails and mines. If it wasn't deemed "wilderness" in 1972 when boundaries were drawn up, what has changed and how is it now "wilderness"?
5. Both Riverside and San Diego counties have asserted their RS 2477 rights and have failed miserably in enforcing them. Access to more and more "public land" is lost each year by road closures from private land holders, not to mention state and federal agencies. The "Old Chihuahua Road" is located in this area and has been in use for well over one hundred-twenty years. It will be affected.
6. The California Riding and Hiking Trail (Cienaga Truck Trail) runs directly through the center of this land. Now, due to regulations and oversight, trailheads and access areas are non-existent, making access even more difficult to the existing Beauty Wilderness Area, not to mention multi-use access, horse camps and campgrounds as provided in the original 1945 California legislations.
7. The prospect for a catastrophic fire in this area is all but a foregone conclusion. Fire fighting equipment such as dozers, engines and other motorized equipment is forbidden in "wilderness". Agencies have addressed this concern by saying they will make concessions and allow this equipment to fight such a fire because of the local communities concerns for their safety. Now, it is either "wilderness", or it isn't; what's it going to be? They can't have their cake and eat it too. If equipment isn't allowed, who wishes to step up and answer to all those who lose their homes and livelihood because of a catastrophic fire that can't legally be fought with modern fire fighting equipment. I smell a lawsuit one way or the other.
8. Pre existing and historical access to this area will be denied with a "wilderness" designation.

Congressman Issa, in conclusion this is bad business altogether. I invite you to take a day off and come along on a trip to this area. Spend a Saturday with those who know the region intimately. We don't bite and haven't been convicted of anything serious yet. Please come and spend the day with me and my fellow hunters and off-roaders, and baby-boomers in this area and allow us to show you what we mean when we tell you this is NOT "wilderness" and should not be granted this designation with the stroke of a pen. This same invitation was given to Mary Bono-Mack when she first proposed the Riverside County section of Beauty to become wilderness. The closest she ever got to this area was a fly over at 30,000 feet on her way back from Washington.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

*Thomas Firth*

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