

Inappropriate Wilderness additions in Sequoia National Forest



With over 59% of the Sequoia National Forest designated as Wilderness there is more reason than ever to preserve the remaining Sequoia National Forest as a “Land of Many Uses” to be enjoyed by the majority of the public



Forty-Eight existing Semi-Primitive multiple use trails are at risk of being closed by inappropriate Wilderness. Eliminating much needed access for mountain bike, trail bike, hunting, fishing, camping & more. These closures will eliminate loop trails & volunteerism, while increasing impacts on remaining trails.

Inappropriate Proposed Wilderness additions in Sequoia National Forest

In 2002 & 2006 Senator Boxer proposed three Wilderness additions in the Sequoia National Forest, which failed. In 2007 Senator Boxer is again proposing the same areas for Wilderness designation in her "California Wild Heritage Bill" S-493

- None of these areas meet the intent of Wilderness as untouched by the hand of man. They have been logged, grazed & mined for over 150 years.
- None of these areas were recommended for Wilderness in the Forest Service Roadless Area Map of 9/2000 (enclosed)
- The Wilderness Proposal would close 23% (104,000 acres) of the remaining multiple use lands without public or Forest Service involvement.
- The closure would force mountain bikers & motorized users off 48 existing Designated Single-Track Multiple Use trails & thereby increase impacts & maintenance costs on remaining trails.
- Demand for multiple use trails is increasing & in response trail systems need to be maintained or expanded, not closed.
- Over 59% of the Sequoia National Forest is already Designated Wilderness or Monument, able to be enjoyed by the hardy few, who have the time & ability to hike long distances.
- Over 21,000 people have signed a petition opposing any new Wilderness designations in California

There are at least five trails in these proposed areas that have been formally adopted by Volunteer groups under MOU with the Sequoia Forest. Stewards of the Sequoia have adopted four of them. Over just the past two years our motorized volunteers have donated thousand of hours on these multiple use trails to keep the land healthy & make them more enjoyable for everyone.

- **These single-track trails are the best-motorized trail system in Southern California as noted by soil Scientist Dr. Roger Poff in his report to Forest Service.** These trails are irreplaceable & need to be preserved for future generations for multiple recreational uses.
- These areas are a perfect example of how well multiple use trails can work. The wildlife and vegetation are abundant, showing no degradation from motorized use, or any other current use. The area is remote & primitive. It will remain so without Wilderness Designation. The area & trails are one of last havens for those who wish to seek solitude using motorized & mountain bike access.
- The single-track motorized trails in these areas are vital for hunting & fishing access.



Best Motorized Single-Track Trails, as note by Soil Scientist Dr Poff, would be closed to motorized users, who have adopted & maintained them

OHV trail users contributed almost \$8 million in 2005 for Forest Service trails in California, which was 33% more than the combined contributions from all non-motorized groups. Although OHV users provide the lion's share of trail funding, only one-fifth of the trails in this area allow motorized recreation. Proposed Wilderness would further reduce OHV trails, while providing no funding to maintain trails.

- Prior to the recent closures of hundreds of miles of the best of the best trails to motorized use in the nearby Sequoia Monument, Forest Service 1988 LRMP noted there were not enough motorized trails for current or future needs
- The views from the motorized single-track trails in this area proposed for Wilderness are some of the last of the best views available to motorized users.
- The remote nature of these motorized trails is extremely valuable to motorized users & is increasingly rare due to recent trail closures in other areas recently designated Wilderness.
- The motorized trails in this area offer long loop opportunities, something the Forest Service has identified as beneficial, but harder & harder to provide as more areas are closed to motorized use.



The Majority of the Public is happy to share Multiple Use Trails. These trails provide the "Greatest Good" & best "Net Public Benefit", since all users benefit from the maintenance on shared trails

PROPOSED WILDERNESS DETAILS & CONCERNS

BRIGHTSTAR ADDITION 48,000 acres Would close approximately 22 existing Multiple Use trails to motorized & mountain bike use

Closures would include Four Designated Motorized trails, Willow Gulch 34E41, Little Dry 32E52, Long Canyon 34E40 and Dry Meadow 34E31. These trails have been adopted by Stewards motorized volunteers, who have donated thousand of documented hours over just the past two years. Motorized users have donated many thousands of hours in prior years.

These 22 Multiple Use motorized trails, form the large part of the trail system accessed by motorized users and mountain bike riders from the Landers Campground in the Piutes, as well the motorized trail system accessed by the residents of the small communities in the Piutes.

The trails are the only access from the community of Lake Isabella to the motorized single-track routes in the Piute Mountains above.



At Least Four Trails Adopted & Maintained By Stewards of the Sequoia motorized volunteers would be closed to motorized use

These single-track trails are the best motorized trail system in Southern California, as noted by soil Scientist Dr. Roger Poff, in his report to Forest Service. These trails are irreplaceable & need to be preserved for future generations for multiple-use.

There are incomparable views along Motorized single-track trails from Dry Meadow, Woolstalf Meadow & Inspiration Point. (picture at right)



Incomparable view Single-Track & 4x4 motorized access trails would be closed to Inspiration Point under inappropriate Wilderness Proposal

GOLDEN TROUT ADDITION 41,280 acres

Would close 11 Designated Multiple Use trails to motorized & mountain bike use



Over 48 trails Vital to Hunting & Fishing Access would be closed to motorized use

Closures would include the

Designated Rincon 33E23 and Cedar Canyon 33E26 Trails, 33E24, 33E27, Rattlesnake 33E22, Bonita 34E0134E22, 34E23, 34E04, 33E21, 33E19, which have historically been enjoyed by motorized users & Mountain Bikes. Significant OHV funds have been spent on these trails over the decades. This would represent a huge lost investment to the motorized public.

This would close motorized destination trails, which motorized users travel from around the world to enjoy such as Rincon, Schaeffer & Rattlesnake.

Many of these trails have been

adopted by motorized groups who have performed hundred of hours of volunteer work, including re-routing a long section of trail with the Forest Service to reduce erosion impacts & make the trail more enjoyable for all.

DOMELANDS ADDITION 11,200 acres

Would close 2 Designated Multiple Use trails to motorized & mountain bike use

Closures would include designated 34E12, 33E28 trails to motorized use

This area includes the Sierretta Peak trail, which has been historically open to motorized use until it was closed a number of years ago with the understanding that the trail would be re routed to allow motorized use. This area offers tremendous views.

WILDFIRE RISK INCREASED BY WILDERNESS

There is also concern about the high fuel load in these areas, and if they are designated as Wilderness, fire-fighting efforts will be more limited, and there will be a greater devastation to forest and wildlife.

CONCLUSION

The California Wild Heritage Act S-493 is unnecessary legislation. Moreover it utilizes a wilderness selection method that is completely subjective and fails to include recommendations made by the federal agencies land use agencies.

Under statute the Forest Service and other federal agencies are required to recommend suitable areas as Wilderness. Areas proposed for Wilderness by this bill are selected through compilation of a "citizen's inventory" by strong wilderness advocates. This inventory has not been subject to any form of public review. It is unclear if these proposed additions meet established criteria for selection of wilderness.

The act of Congressional designation of wilderness is an almost irreversible step with the potential to significantly limit access to public lands. For this reason only Congress has the authority to designate Wilderness.

Agencies such as the Forest Service have had a policy of protection of roadless areas, wilderness study areas, and recommended wilderness for over 30 years. On what basis should this bill be allowed to override the authority of the Forest Service and to circumvent the established process for selection of wilderness already in place?

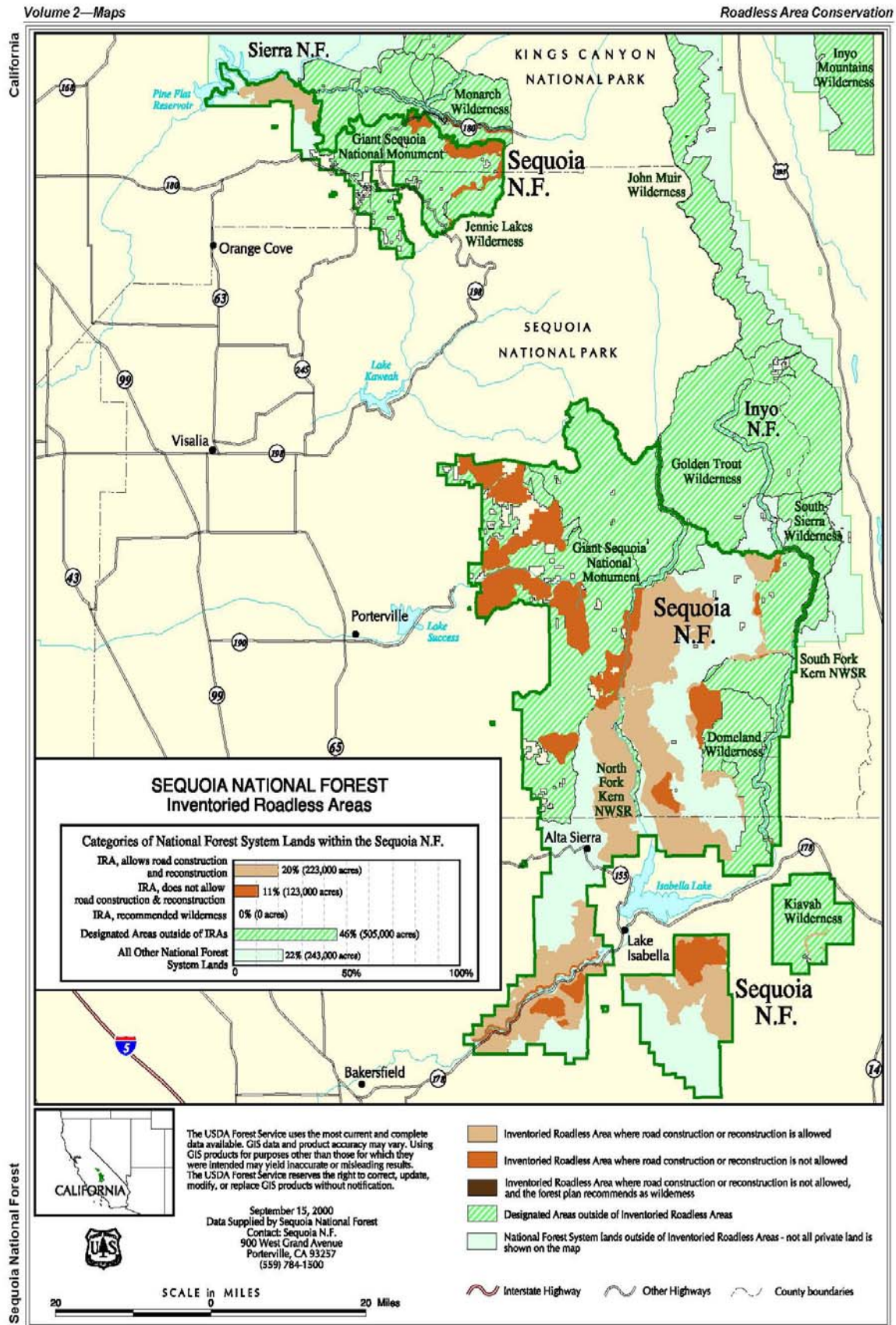
This bill is therefore unnecessary and serves no specific purpose as adequate land use planning and protection for public lands has been addressed by previous legislation.

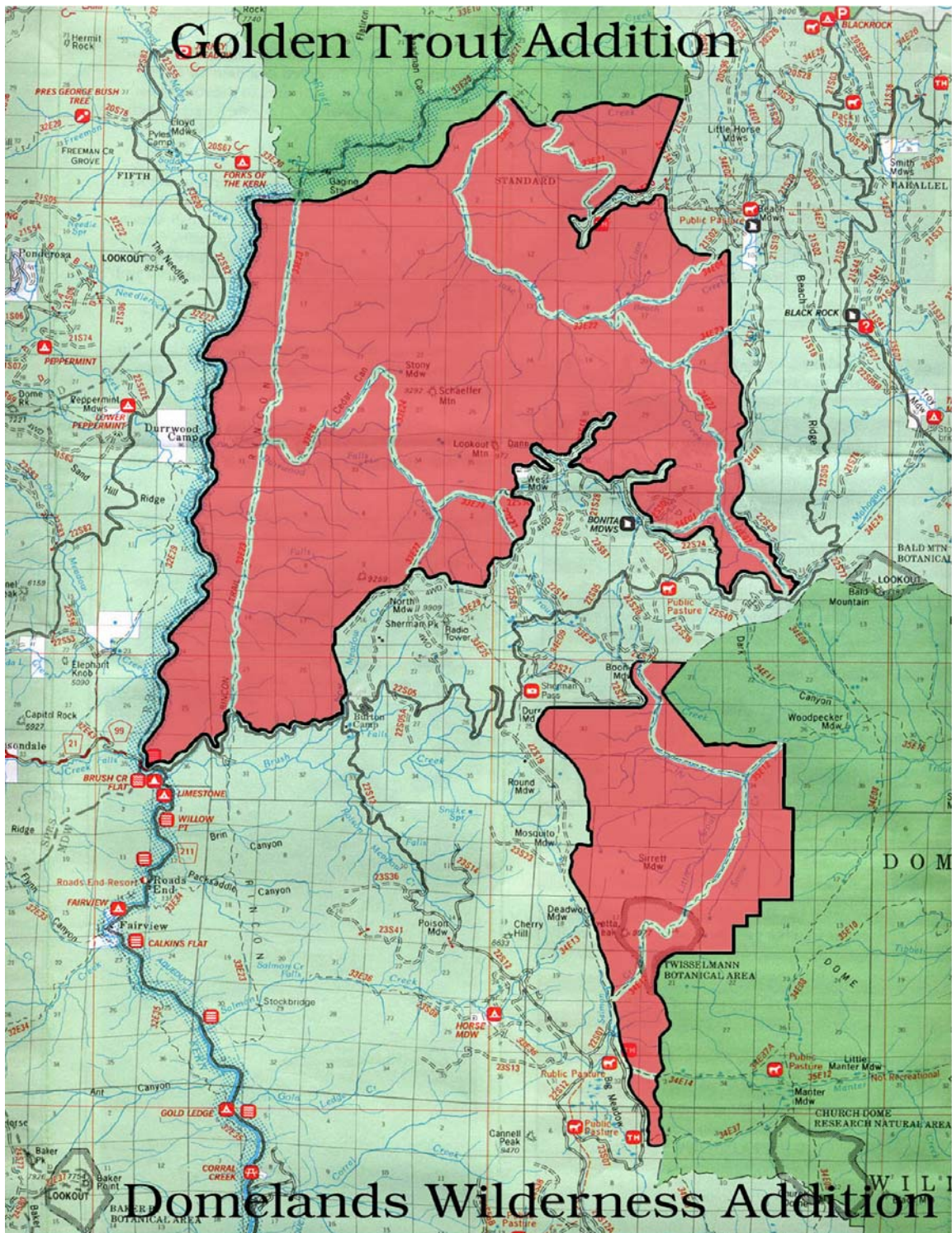
Attached:

1. Forest Service 9/2000 map recommending none of these areas for Wilderness
2. Inventory Map highlighting proposed Wilderness in RED indicating existing motorized/mountain bike trails which would be closed to those uses
3. Letter from Congressman Pombo opposing inappropriate Wilderness
4. Letter from Senator Morrow opposing Wilderness additions

This report was prepared by Stewards of the Sequoia, a division of California Trail User 501c3 non-profit

Approximately 59% of the Sequoia is already Wilderness
 None (0%) of the proposed areas were recommended for Wilderness by Sequoia Forest as shown in the legend on the Sequoia Inventory map below

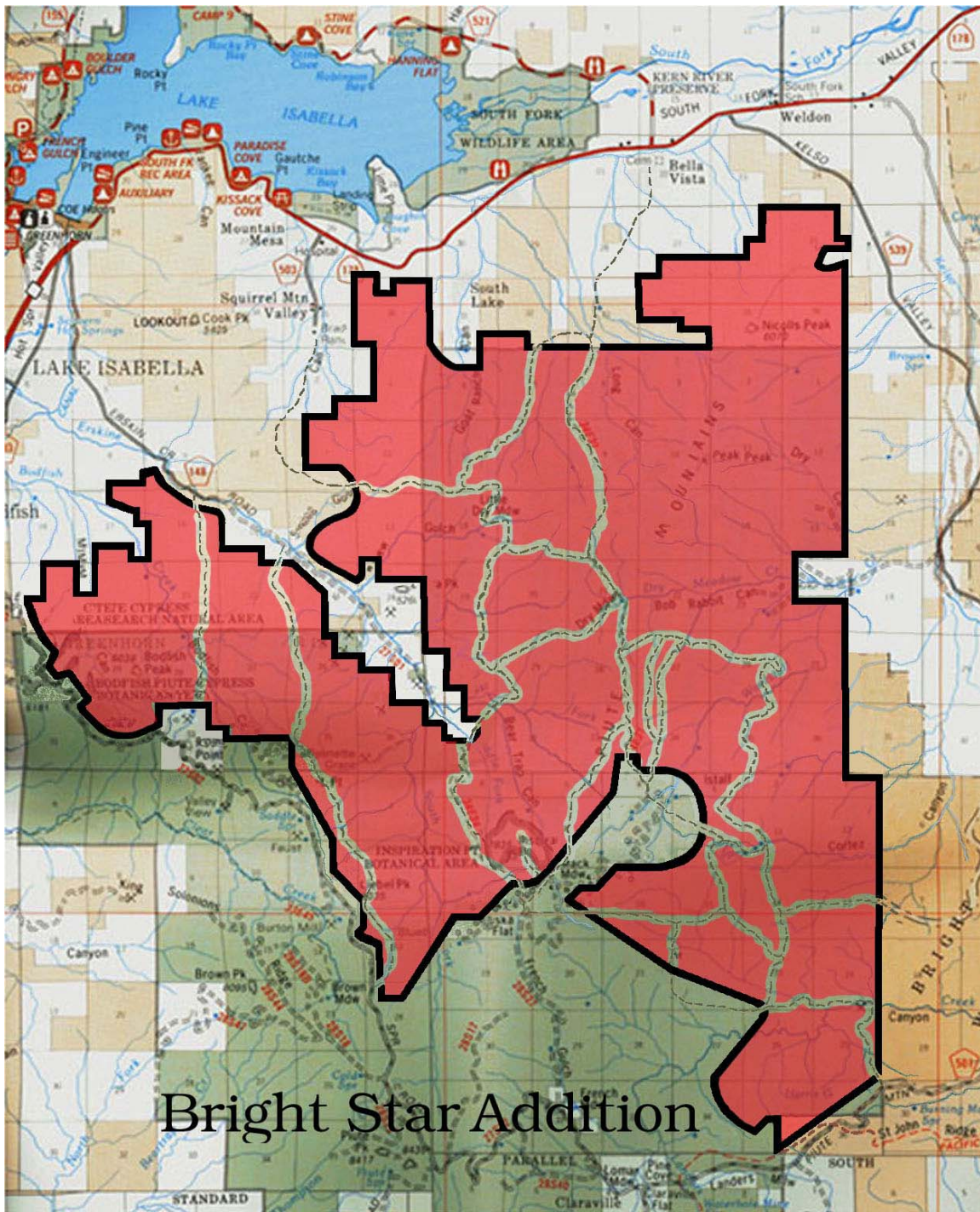




Above Proposed Wilderness additions (RED) were not recommended by Sequoia Forest. but if enacted would:

1. Close 13 existing single track multiple use loop trails to historic mountain bike & trail bike use (dashed lines)
2. Eliminate existing multiple use access
3. Increase impacts on remaining trail systems outside proposed Wilderness Areas.
Increasing impacts will increase maintenance costs

At least three trails within the proposed area have been adopted by motorized trail clubs. This proposal would eliminate their volunteer work & prohibit them from using the trails they love & care for.



Bright Star Addition

Above Proposed Wilderness addition (RED) was not recommended by Sequoia Forest, but if enacted would:

1. Close 22 existing single track multiple use loop trails to historic mountain bike & trail bike use (dashed lines)
2. Eliminate existing multiple use access
3. Increase impacts on remaining trail systems outside proposed Wilderness Areas.
Increasing impacts will increase maintenance costs

At least five trails within the proposed area have been adopted by motorized volunteers. This proposal would eliminate their volunteer work & prohibit them from using the trails they love & care for.