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STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

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SPEAKER: Mr. BIDEN; Mrs. BOXER; Mrs. FEINSTEIN; Mr. OBAMA; Mr. CARDIN

TEXT: [*12289]

By Mrs. BOXER:

[S. 2109](#). A bill to designate certain Federal lands in Riverside County, California, as **wilderness**, to designate certain river segments in Riverside County as a wild, scenic, or recreational river, to adjust the boundary of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, today, I am proud to introduce the California Desert and Mountain Heritage Act. This bipartisan legislation will protect nearly 200,000 acres of pristine and ecologically sensitive lands in Riverside County as **Wilderness** or Potential **Wilderness**, the highest level of protection and conservation for Federal public lands in American law.

Over the past year, I worked with my colleague, Representative Mary Bono, who represents the areas protected in this bill. Together, we worked to reach consensus with local officials, environmentalists, businesses, sportsmen, and Indian tribes. The result is this bipartisan, bicameral bill.

Riverside County contains some of California's, indeed, America's, most spectacular desert and mountain vistas and landscapes. The breathtaking lands protected in this bill also provide habitat for threatened bighorn sheep and the desert tortoise, as well as many other species such as mule deer, mountain quail, and bald eagles.

Specifically, the bill protects 150,531 acres of lands as **wilderness**, highest level of protection and conservation for Federal public lands in American law. Another 41,100 acres of land would be designated as potential **wilderness**. Once the final inholding claims are settled by the National Park Service, these lands will become "**wilderness**" without the necessity of an additional act of Congress. In the meantime, these lands will be managed by the Park Service as "**wilderness**."

The bill also designates 31 miles of river as wild and scenic on four California Rivers: North Fork San Jacinto River, Fuller Mill Creek, Palm Canyon Creek, and Bautista Creek. These rivers are biologically important watersheds in this dry part of my State.

Many of these lands were included in my statewide **wilderness** bill, the California Wild Heritage Act, which I reintroduced in February.

The bill has broad, local support including from Riverside County supervisors, municipalities, chambers of commerce, environmentalists, sportsmen, and businesses. The bill includes important provisions clarifying that Federal agencies could use all the tools necessary to fight and prevent wildfires. The **wilderness** boundaries were drawn in consultation with local communities and tribes.

I look forward to working with local interests and all of my colleagues to see this important legislation enacted.