REVISED
MARIPOSA COUNTY RESOLUTION NO. 02-19

A RESOLUTION OPPOSING WILDERNESS AREA DESIGNATIONS
IN MARIPOSA COUNTY

WHEREAS, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors considered public input,
both written and verbal, on a proposal to designate the South Fork area as a Federal
Wilderness Area, on January 15, 2002; and

WHEREAS, consideration was given to the fact that approximately one-half of
the land in Mariposa County is in public ownership; and

WHEREAS, concern was expressed relative to potential fire dangers and
restrictions that may impact the public under a Federal Wilderness Area designation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mariposa County Board of
Supervisors, a political subdivision of the State of California, hereby opposes any more
Federal Wilderness Area designation in Mariposa County.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors on this
15th day of January 2002, by the following vote:

AYES: BALMAIN, STEWART, PARKER, PICKARD
NOES: REILLY
ABSENT: NONE
ABSTAINED: NONE

Robert C. Stewart
ROBERT C. STEWART, Chairman
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

ATTEST:

Margie Williams, Clerk of the Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

Jeffrey G. Green, County Counsel

Note: Revision due to the omission of the word “more” in the fourth paragraph of the original Resolution. (05/28/02)
MARIPOSA COUNTY RESOLUTION NO. 02-19

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NOES: REILLY
ABSENT: NONE
ABSTAINED: NONE

ROBERT C. STEWART, Chairman
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

ATTEST:

MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

JEFFREY C. GREEN, County Counsel
January 30, 2002

Senator Barbara Boxer
112 Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Federal Wilderness Area Designation

Dear Senator Boxer,

This letter is to inform you that on January 15, 2002, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors took action by Resolution 02-19, opposing any Federal Wilderness Area designation in Mariposa County.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Robert C. Stewart
Chairman
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

Enclosure

RCS/pm
January 30, 2002

Senator Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Federal Wilderness Area Designation

Dear Senator Feinstein,

This letter is to inform you that on January 15, 2002, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors took action by Resolution 02-19, opposing any Federal Wilderness Area designation in Mariposa County.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Stewart
Chairman
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

Enclosure

RCS/pm
January 30, 2002

Congressman George Radanovich
19th District
313 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0518

RE: Federal Wilderness Area Designation

Dear Congressman Radanovich,

This letter is to inform you that on January 15, 2002, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors took action by Resolution 02-19, opposing any Federal Wilderness Area designation in Mariposa County.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Stewart
Chairman
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

Enclosure

RCS/pm
January 30, 2002

Senator Dick Monteith
12th District
State Capitol, Room 2048
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Federal Wilderness Area Designation

Dear Senator Monteith,

This letter is to inform you that on January 15, 2002, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors took action by Resolution 02-19, opposing any Federal Wilderness Area designation in Mariposa County.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Stewart
Chairman
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

Enclosure

RCS/pm
January 30, 2002

Assemblyman Dave Cogdill  
25th District  
State Capitol, Room 4208  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Federal Wilderness Area Designation

Dear Assemblyman Cogdill,

This letter is to inform you that on January 15, 2002, the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors took action by Resolution 02-19, opposing any Federal Wilderness Area designation in Mariposa County.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Robert C. Stewart  
Chairman  
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

Enclosure

RCS/pm
COUNTY of MARIPosa
P.O. Box 784, Mariposa, CA 95338 (209) 966-3222
ROBERT C. STEWART, CHAIRMAN
PATTI A. REILLY, VICE-CHAIRMAN
DOUG BALMAIN
GARRY R. PARKER
BOB PICKARD
DISTRICT III
DISTRICT I
DISTRICT II
DISTRICT IV
DISTRICT V

MARIPOSA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
MINUTE ORDER

TO: GARRY R. PARKER, Supervisor, District IV
FROM: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board

SUBJECT: Resolution on Wilderness Area
Resolution No. 02-19

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MARIPOSA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA,

ADOPTED THIS Order on January 15, 2002

ACTION AND VOTE:

11:05 a.m. Supervisor Parker;
Discussion and Possible Action on Wilderness Area

BOARD ACTION: Supervisor Parker advised that he requested that this matter be scheduled on the
agenda to give the public an opportunity to provide input. Supervisor Pickard advised that a map showing
the proposed area being considered for designation as Wilderness is available. He also advised of a
meeting held on Monday with Tom Bohigian of Senator Boxer’s office, and he reviewed the status of the
proposal and the Senator’s attempt to establish a Wilderness area that is different from previous areas and
that addresses the issues that have been raised.

Chairman Stewart asked for a show of hands of those who wished to speak and requested that comments
be held to three to five minutes per person. Input from the public was provided by the following:

Lorna Webb stated she is a resident of the County, an active member of the California State
Horsemen’s Association and very involved with youth and the 4-H horse and pony project. She stated that
today she is representing herself and a group of concerned citizens; and she advised of 530 letters of
opposition they have received and faxed to Senator Boxer and Congressman Radanovich. She commented
on the action taken by the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and advised that the EDC does not
speak for all of the citizens of the County. She referred to the acreage of federal wilderness land in the
State and management by the various federal entities; and the prohibition of logging and commercial
activities, and the ban of mechanized equipment and vehicles. She noted that roads are forbidden and she
feels these bans will make fire management impossible. She noted that the South Fork of the Merced
River, a California Wild Trout Stream and National Wild and Scenic River designated by President Reagan,
is located in the proposed wilderness area, and the trails offer remarkable views and an abundance of
wildlife. She further advised that her family has enjoyed this area and the County for over ninety years, and
family members helped to build many roads. They have also reopened old trails and assisted with
maintaining trails in this area, and dedicated volunteers still maintain the trails. She would like to see future generations enjoy this area. She requested that the Board not support the placement of the proposed area in wilderness, and that the Board adopt a resolution of no more wilderness in Mariposa County.

Becky Crafts, Vice-President of the Mariposa Mountain Riders, a concerned citizen, and as a parent of a 4-H project member, stated she feels it is disheartening to see what a small group can start without having public input. She stated she feels that this was hurriedly done to attach this area to another bill, and that the size of the proposed acreage is large and affects a number of people. She requested that the Board adopt a resolution opposing any wilderness in the County. She noted that people in the community have volunteered and will continue to volunteer to keep the trails open. She noted they have eighteen members in the 4-H equine project.

Chuck Machak stated he enjoys the outdoors. He feels that with this wilderness area proposal, users in future generations will be a small group of hikers and campers, and he will not be able to enjoy the area because he will be unable to hike as far. He noted that his wife can’t hike and they do not like crowds of people, but enjoy driving in this area. He stated he is opposed to the wilderness area proposal. He also referred to changes and restrictions that occurred in the Mojave Desert after Senator Cranston was successful in getting legislation through – people cannot get to the Kelso Dunes now.

Vere Geary, of the Jerseylade area, stated she does not feel that the federal government has had a good record of taking care of land they manage, and she cited recent fires that have occurred on federally managed lands. She noted the dead and dying timber due to the beetle infestations on federal lands. She referred to the fire in Washington last summer that killed people, and expressed concern with the fire danger in the Jerseylade area and the narrow road accessing the area. She also expressed concern with the lack of public notice on this issue. She stated she feels their homes and lives are at stake in this matter.

Lee Stetson stated he is generally in favor of a wilderness area for the South Fork area and he feels that the people being impacted by this should have ample input. He feels the suddenness of this proposal needs time for reaction. He feels people are opposed because they feel they will lose something now or down the road. But, he feels that the people who are in favor of this proposal also feel they will lose something. He feels the concerns of both sides are genuine and need to be addressed. He feels we need to listen to each other and respond in respect for each other and in respect of the South Fork area. He urged that time be given to allow all citizens to create a forum for understanding.

Reid Marks stated this area is very brushy and steep and little of the area is used. He feels the problem with creating a small wilderness area like this would be like telling someone to keep a clean house, except for the dining room. He feels this would change how the land can be managed. He noted that the Devils Gulch area has been burned on a control burn to reduce the fire danger and allows for cattle grazing – a control burn would not be allowed in a wilderness area. Based on the size of the proposed area, he feels it should not be made a wilderness area. He feels that the majority of the land is safe because you can not do anything with it.

Ed McConnaughey referred to the Wilderness Reclamation Act, and stated he feels that the property could be purchased under this Act and the public could be kept out permanently.

Evie Wilson stated she does not understand what is happening – the control is increasing. She commented on the Wilderness Act and expressed concern with the fire danger in the area and to the nearby communities. She referred to the situation in Australia where the fires are burning out of control and have burned cities. She asked whether the exceptions proposed by Senator Boxer for this area would be adopted when the vote is taken in Washington, D.C., and whether this would set a precedence for future wilderness designations. She feels the control groups have already set an agenda and each side will push their agenda, and she feels it is up to the local citizens to set limits of this “special interest take-over” of public lands. She requested that the Board adopt a resolution opposing this and any other wilderness proposal that comes before the Board. She feels this proposal will affect lives and property.

Michael Demaso stated he was representing himself, his family, and the Merced Dirt Riders, Inc. He noted they have been dealing with the restrictions of wilderness areas since the early 1970’s, and they have compromised many times and each time, more of their rights are taken away. He stated he feels this process needs to be slowed or stopped. He feels that only two percent of the population visits wilderness areas, the rest visit the forests. He feels that more and more groups are affected by the wilderness designations. He urged the Board to adopt a resolution opposing any more wilderness designations in the County and in the State.
Gayle Jones stated he has been involved with wilderness areas and owned pack stations in these areas, and he has watched the wilderness areas continually enlarge. He stated he feels that as administration changes, there are different opinions on management issues. Once a wilderness area is started, he feels it grows like a tumor and the people get to use less and less of the land.

Ralph Mendershausen stated he was representing himself, and stated he feels it is important to realize that we have an opportunity here. He referred to the concern relative to fire issues and stated he feels this discussion could perhaps bring about a fire plan for the area. He referred to the Wild and Scenic designation for the Merced River and the Saxon Creek project that followed. He stated he does not want to see the discussion cut off – he feels this is an opportunity to protect the wilderness that exists. He commented on the mixed messages being received from the Forest Service regarding the use of chain saws in wilderness areas, and he stated it would be good to have a clear understanding of the issues. He stated that because people do not want this, doesn’t mean that it is bad for the area. He feels this is an emotional process, and he referred to the original location of the area and changes to the proposed area as a result of the input they received. He stated the wilderness designation does not prohibit fighting fires if there are dangers to the people. He urged the Board to not make a decision at this time.

Barry Brouillette stated he is a proponent of the South Fork being designated as wilderness – this is a predisposition he has had and will continue to have. However, he noted the proposed map designating the wilderness area is being influenced by the dialog of the issues being raised, such as fire, recreational use, and traditional uses such as gathering fire wood. He stated he does not deny or begrudge the sentiments of the people that are opposed to this. He asked that the process be slowed and he noted that people have been working on this proposal for a long time, and he feels there needs to be an opportunity to get all of the facts on the table. He also noted that the EDC is only speaking for their group with the action they took.

Frank Long stated he feels the pseudo environmentalists are after us again, and he does not feel that we can compromise with them – they have nothing to offer. He stated he feels the wilderness area has produced a lot of timber and those revenues go to the County and schools – timber sales have been cut back because of lawsuits from people like the proponents of this proposal and the revenues have been reduced. He noted that Sugar Pine timber is produced in this area and it is the finest softwood in the world. He feels people forget the source of the products and our resources. He stated he feels that wise use of our resources will not occur if this is designated as wilderness. He stated he feels it is a sick forest, and that healthy forests are in private hands under private management. He referred to the potential dangers, including fire. He stated he feels there is no reason to not allow timber sales and grazing to occur in this area. He asked what purpose the wilderness designation will serve, and he noted it won’t eliminate the snakes and heat.

Stan Rothfuss, Mariposa Fish and Game President, stated the Fish and Game strongly opposes this proposal. He noted that other recreational resources do not exist in the County for our children. He stated he strongly opposes this proposal and urged the Board to oppose it.

Dick Kunzman, Midpines resident, stated he is in favor of a wilderness designation at this time. He stated he feels there is a lot of misinformation as to what the designation will accomplish and allow. He stated the use of 4-wheel drives and other uses would still be allowed on the existing roads, the wilderness boundary is separate from the roads. The only impact would be in leaving the road and traveling cross-country, and that can be stopped under the present laws. This has not been enforced, but it is considered trespass to leave a forest road. He feels the issue of fire danger is being exaggerated because the boundaries will have to be adjusted to conform to the Sierra Nevada Amendment Plan, which sets up buffer zones around communities. He commented on his review of the Bricburg fire data – it started with a lightening strike and they bulldozed the roads necessary to contain the fire and additional roads when the fire escaped original containment lines. He stated they will still be able to do that in a designated wilderness area. They will have to obtain authorization, but it will be granted. He commented on the issues with the Yellowstone National Park fire and he noted it started with nineteen separate lightening strikes that occurred within a short period of time. He advised that in the Sierra Nevada Eco System Report to Congress, there is a careful analysis of what to expect in these types of situations, and it is almost impossible to fight these fires successfully due to the lack of resources.

Stanley Bissmeyer stated he is a previous resident of the County and worked for CYA. He commented on his experiences as a crew counselor and time spent in the South Fork area building trails. He referred to large fires that have occurred in the County and of the possibility of lightening strikes
occurring simultaneously. He stated he feels this designation will prevent vehicles, timber harvest and cattle grazing activities in the area. He stated he feels government does not manage its land; and that funds do not get returned to replant and maintain the tree plantation in these areas. He stated he is concerned with the future.

Richard Shelton, Catheys Valley resident and member of the Will Riskit Bicycle Club, stated they enjoy this area and others. They would like to be able to continue enjoying this area with the bicycles. He referred to his work in this area during the Briceburg fire, and he noted that he saw bulldozers going places that he could not climb. He feels that without the support of bulldozers, the fire could not have been contained. There were places the air support could not reach. He noted that after the fire, the bulldozers came back and reconditioned/restored the forest area. He stated that without these resources, he would not enter this area.

Lyle Turpin thanked the audience for its input and stated he feels that this issue is more than emotional, that people have done research. He noted that our public lands are multi-purpose and when we begin limiting those uses, our tax dollars are still supporting the land and they can’t be used by everyone. He noted that one-half of the land in our County is under public ownership, and he feels that anytime additional land is added, there is a burden put back on our citizens. He also stated he feels that this gets to be a law enforcement issue. In regard to the fire danger issues, he advised that the volunteers who serve on the strike teams have seen the lack of a timely response for equipment to be authorized on fires and watched thousands of acres being lost. He noted that the search and rescue uses motorized vehicles and expressed concern with the safety impacts if this is designated wilderness. He asked why this proposal was not addressed at the time the Sierra Nevada Framework was being done. He also noted that following the events of September 11th, that we need to be sure that we can access our natural resources. He referred to the use of the terms “try” and “possible”, and stated he feels that “if it’s not broke, let’s not fix it.”

Mary Darlene Theodore commented on Ralph Mendershausen’s suggestion that the Board not take any action at this time, when he and Barry Brouillette used the power of the EDC to take action to support this proposal. She presented 103 signed requests to the Board that were received this morning, requesting that the Board adopt a resolution of “no more wilderness in Mariposa County.” She stated she feels the citizens are looking to the Board to speak for them versus the EDC and the Chamber of Commerce.

Tina Andoline of the Wilderness Coalition, commented on their membership and the background of this proposal. The Coalition reviewed how many acres were available in the State for designation as wilderness, and they worked for three years reviewing maps. Over 100 volunteers were sent into the field to look at the eligible sites. When they finished with their survey work, they realized that ninety acres a day were being lost that previously qualified because they had roads constructed or were being logged. They began working with the council members on this proposed site about two years ago, and the map has changed a lot due to the input they have received, especially in regard to the fire issues. She stated fires can be fought in the wilderness area and have been, and it is the law that equipment can be used to protect lives and property. She referred to the exceptions that Senator Boxer is proposing for this area and the concerns the citizens have expressed. She stated the areas are created so that people can access them in the state they are today. She urged the Board to continue taking comments and to keep the dialog going.

Dennis Buck stated he is a business owner and a member of the County Fire Department. He referred to the fire issues and comments about buffer zones, and stated he does not feel a buffer zone will work — that you will need to be able to use bulldozers to control fires and protect the neighboring communities. He referred to the Briceburg fire and stated he lives here to enjoy the mountains and the historic areas. He stated he has not been to a wilderness area where he is allowed to hunt and drive, and that will affect those who are unable to walk. He urged the Board to “shoot this proposal in the foot and let it hobble out.” He referred to the dying pine trees as a result of the beetles and now the oak tree disease, and he feels this area will be impacted. He stated he likes being able to gather firewood with a permit, and that would not be allowed with the wilderness designation. He further stated that he does not understand how the Chamber of Commerce took action to support this proposal, as he does not feel that it is good for business.

Supervisor Balmain stated he feels sufficient input has been provided for the Board to be able to take action. Chairman Stewart advised that he had already recognized the following person to provide input.

Colette Wear, a Will Riskit Bicycle Club member and speaking as a concerned citizen, stated she likes to hike and bike. She noted that the proponents are asking that those with concerns take their time and
work the issues out; however, the EDC has already urged Senator Boxer to move forward on this proposal. She expressed concern with deleting trails and the use of roads and with being able to continue to continue bicycling in the area. She stated she does not feel the tourist trade will be improved with this proposal; for the most part, the tourists do not hike in these areas. She stated she would prefer to drive part way in to the area and then begin her hike, and she likes to bicycle on the trails. She stated she feels the area is being used efficiently, and one person’s misuse should not impact others. She stated she enjoys the freedom to use our land and does not feel the public land should be taken away from the public.

(M)Balmain, (S)Pickard, Res. 02-19 adopted opposing any more wilderness area designation in Mariposa County, with direction for this action to be sent to our federal and state legislative representatives. Further discussion was held. Supervisor Pickard stated he would like to see our legislators look at this issue from the public side and the maintenance that is required. Supervisor Reilly stated she understands that a great number of her constituents are fiercely opposed and have raised serious concern; however, she will not support a motion to support or oppose the wilderness designation as she does not feel the discussion is finished. She stated she wants to take this opportunity to discuss the process and get public input – she believes that the best government is local government and the best input comes from the local level. She stated she feels there has been an increased strategy to go past the Board and get support, and she hopes we can commit to obtaining local input on items and have the Board involved in the preliminary stages, and that ideas can be discussed and points of views shared on issues. She also stated she feels that federal funding needs to be pursued to address the fire safety issues. Supervisor Parker stated he supports the motion; however, he agrees that the Board should have been involved more in the preliminary consideration of this matter and other issues that come up. He further noted that the EDC letterhead and the Chamber of Commerce use Mariposa County in their headings, and the citizens relate that to the County and the Board of Supervisors. He questioned why the designation is necessary if the issues can be resolved. He referred to his visits to Death Valley and the changes that occurred when the designation changed from a monument to a park. Ayes: Balmain, Stewart, Parker, Pickard; Noes: Reilly.

File