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April 17, 2009

The Honorable Nick Rahall II  
Chair, House Natural Resources Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rahall:

The Natural Resources Defense Council is pleased to add its name to the list of supporters of H.R. 980, the Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act. NREPA will protect 24 million acres of the best federal lands across Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Oregon, and Washington. Its adoption will be a giant step toward ensuring that the national heritage we treasure and benefit so greatly from is passed along to future generations unimpaired.

The lands this visionary bill will permanently safeguard comprise the last, intact, big wild ecosystem in the lower 48 states. These mountains, forests, and prairielands represent the dazzling natural heritage of a vast, blessed country at its grandest and most rich. From the Kettle Range to the Wind Rivers, NREPA will protect for all time the last best wildlands we have, south of Alaska. A feast for the eye and respite for the soul, they are also the critical habitat for hundreds of hard-pressed species: grizzlies, wolverines, caribou, bull trout, lynx, and sockeye, among many others. Source of clear, cold water, buffer against floods, wildfire, and invasive species, our most resilient refugia in a warming world, NREPA's lands are beyond price. By protecting them, we will save something of the essence of America, stem the loss of nature's grandeur, shelter our fellow creatures, immeasurably enrich future generations, and set a shining example for other nations.

We look forward with anticipation to passage of this landmark bill.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Lawrence  
Director, Forestry Project

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