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Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

## STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have approved S. 267, which designates a 235,230-acre Flat Tops Wilderness within the Routt and White River National Forests of Colorado.

The Congress and the executive branch have worked together during the past 11 years to augment the National Wilderness Preservation System established by the Wilderness Act of 1964. The System, now including more than 12 million acres, shows that much progress has been made in securing for all Americans the benefit of an enduring resource of wilderness. Last year, in two separate messages, I proposed a total of 52 new additions which, if accepted by the Congress, would add about 15 million acres to the Wilderness System.

Although I have signed S. 267, it should be noted that the bill designates an area some 93,000 acres larger than the approximately 142,000-acre wilderness proposed by President Johnson in 1968. Furthermore, it illustrates three concerns of mine regarding the designation of wilderness within the National Forest System.

First, the Administration has strongly and consistently urged the Congress not to designate National Forest areas as wilderness where the evidence of man's activity is clearly apparent. The Flat Tops Wilderness, nevertheless, includes some constructed reservoirs, partially constructed roads, and private lands with cabins and other improvements.

Second, Administration proposals for National Forest wildernesses follow careful study and are designed to assure that the proposed boundaries would, to the maximum extent possible, follow recognizable natural features and be located to facilitate protection of the wilderness. The Flat Tops Wilderness boundaries, in contrast to the Administration's proposal, contain several narrow and deep boundary indentations that will be difficult to define and manage.

Third, this Administration and every other Administration since 1964 have urged the Congress to consider carefully trade-offs between wilderness values and other resource values and uses. These trade-offs are particularly important within the National Forest System where wilderness is but one of several very important resources that must be managed for the benefits of all Americans. The Flat Tops Wilderness contains important forest, water, recreation, wildlife, and forage resource values that will now be partially or completely foregone. Moreover, a mineral survey has not been conducted within much of the area which the Congress added to the Administration's Flat Tops Wilderness proposal. However, because mineral resources within the general Flat Tops area are believed to be minimal, I have decided not to insist that additional mineral studies be undertaken.

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I am hopeful the Congress will work more closely with the executive branch regarding proposed additions to the Wilderness System. Several National Forest Wilderness proposals now being considered by the Congress would include acreages significantly larger than those proposed by the Administration. In some cases, the additional areas would **more than double the acreage** we proposed. **More careful consideration must be given** to these proposals if we are to maintain a high-quality Wilderness System while protecting many other important management opportunities for these lands.

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