

BODIE

continued from page 1

WSA release and against HR 1581, period. It's the most absurd legislation I've ever seen." Hunt also groused about what he said were six people sitting around a table in Bridgeport, who generated thousands of letters and emails [2,462 to be exact] in opposition.

Board Chair Hap Hazard was also in opposition. "To say I'm frustrated and angry about [seeing] this agenda item is an understatement," Hazard blasted. "I [previously] brought an item forward that addressed this, and was roundly criticized. As far as I was concerned this was a closed, dead issue."

During the Board's March 8 meeting, Hazard floated a proposal he considered a last-ditch attempt at appeasing both sides, releasing the WSA, but setting aside both a sphere of influence for mining company Cougar Gold and establishing new wilderness north of

Bodie State Park. The proposal was shot down, and Hazard washed his hands of the whole Bodie Hills issue. On Tuesday, he called HR 1581 an overly broad national piece of legislation into which Mono County had no business sticking its nose.

Critics of WSAs, such as Bridgeport local Ed Inwood, reiterated that WSAs were intended for short-duration study and therefore transitory by definition. Several said they're not necessarily in favor of mining, but suggested the Bodie Hills might be better utilized

for tourism and recreation, and perhaps even as a national monument.

"I don't know if mining's going to happen out there, but if we don't get to the point where we can decide what we can do with the Bodie Hills, we'll never have local control," Bob Peters posited. "It has to be released."

In Washington D.C., BLM Director Bob Abbey recently testified before the House National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee that, although the agency had previously determined that more than 6 million

acres of the total 12.7 million acres of WSAs were unsuitable for wilderness, those recommendations are out of date and do not reflect current circumstances. Abbey said the BLM would likely recommend more areas as suitable for wilderness designation; however, he didn't elaborate as to which WSAs would be recommended.

The RPAC was left to forward a letter of support on its own initiative, should it so choose. What fate awaits HR 1581 is yet to be decided. The bill is in the first steps of the legislative process.



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WHERE: Meet in the Inyo Craters parking area. Please carpool!

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