

29 August 1983

Senator James McClure
5229 Dirksen
Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McClure:

On behalf of the Idaho Chapter of The Wildlife Society, I would like to offer a few comments regarding Idaho's forested roadless areas and their possible designation as wilderness areas. As you may recall, The Wildlife Society is an international organization of professional wildlife biologists. The Idaho Chapter contains about 240 members.

Since the outcome of these deliberations likely represents the last opportunity to make major decisions concerning the fate of Idaho's remaining 6.5 million acres of roadless forest lands, the Idaho Chapter supports the Idaho Wildlife Federation's Proposal 4. This plan calls for the addition of 4.5 million acres of Idaho roadless areas to the Wilderness Preservation System.

The primary reason for our support of Proposal 4 is that it encompasses the preservation of entire ecosystems. All the other proposals seek to preserve only disjointed parcels of land. One of the key principles of ecology is that healthy ecosystems function properly only when left intact. Thus, Proposal 4 seeks to preserve the integrity of entire systems.

The preservation of endangered and threatened species, such as the woodland caribou, is totally dependent on maintaining its habitat as part of a complete, functioning ecosystem. We will eventually lose the caribou and other species in Idaho if preservation of their habitat is not adequate.

Protecting the integrity of entire watersheds also maintains the excellent fishery resources and high water quality we have in Idaho.

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Tourism is the second most important industry in Idaho. People come from around the world to backpack in the Sawtooths or float down the Salmon River. Tourists can go anywhere in the west to see deficit timber sales and logging roads but they come to Idaho to enjoy a wilderness experience. And, they will continue to visit Idaho in ever increasing numbers only if we have something unique to offer them.

Finally, we in Idaho have established a system of values to judge our quality of life; a life centered around the enjoyment of vast acreages of unspoiled land. If we do not preserve adequate acres of wild lands where man is but a temporary visitor rather than a despoiler of nature, this quality of life we hold so dear will be severely diminished.

Nearly 40 years ago conservationist and forester Aldo Leopold spoke eloquently of the need to instill within man a land ethic that "changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it." Unlike elsewhere, we in Idaho still have the opportunity to live by such a standard. Our success or failure to embrace a land ethic will be judged by our foresight in maintaining the integrity of Idaho's wilderness.

Sincerely,

Lewis Nelson, Jr., President
Idaho Chapter - The Wildlife Society

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