

May 19, 1981

10658 Winterhawk
Boise, Idaho 83709

Senator Steve Symms
Federal Building, Room 211
581 Park Avenue
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401

Dear Senator Symms:

I request that this letter be made a part of the official record of your public meeting on Idaho Snake River Omitted Lands to be held at Idaho Falls on May 25, 1981. On behalf of the members of The Idaho Chapter of The Wildlife Society, I strongly urge that these lands be kept in public ownership and that they be managed by BLM. They should not be transferred or converted to private ownership. The importance of these omitted lands to wildlife is known by Idahoans who fish and hunt along the River.

This riparian corridor provides big game habitat for elk, mule deer, moose, and is the only place in eastern Idaho where significant populations of white tailed deer occur. The Idaho record German brown trout was caught on the South Fork this spring. The endangered bald eagle nests and winters on omitted lands. Other non-game birds such as osprey, golden eagles, great blue herons, white pelicans, great horned owls, red-tailed hawks, snowy egrets, cormorants, cavity nesting song birds and shore birds rely on these cottonwood and brushy areas for various functions in their life cycles.

The quality cutthroat fishing on the South Fork draws mostly in-state fishermen from nearby population centers. Local fur bearer enthusiasts find mink, muskrat, beaver and river otter abundant due to the habitat provided by these undeveloped islands and riverbanks. Pheasant, goose, and duck hunters benefit from the nesting, brood rearing, and winter cover that occurs on omitted lands. Fluctuating water levels from Palisades Reservoir and spring runoff affects the omitted lands and flooding problems limit wildlife production for some species. Certainly, this flooding would be a problem for human development if further disposal to private land is authorized in future legislation.

The BLN, which manages the retained omitted lands, and Idaho Fish and Game have studied various components of this diverse ecosystem for better management guidelines. Vegetation, fish and goose production, big game, livestock, and recreation use have been monitored by these agencies and the high wildlife values are unquestionable. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service labeled the South Fork of the Snake River as the number one unique ecosystem in Idaho. The Service is leading an effort to develop a multi-agency memorandum of understanding which will initiate coordinated public resource management in the upriver part of these omitted lands. Visitor use has increased dramatically in the last 10 years and promises to continue to increase.

In summary, the Chapter believes the general public will be best served by retaining those omitted lands in public ownership.

Sincerely,

James F. Gore
President, Idaho Chapter

cc: Senator McClure
Representative Hansen
Representative Craig
Governor Evans

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