

10658 Winterhawk
Boise, Idaho 38709
September 26, 1979

Honorable John Evans
Statehouse
Boise, Idaho 83720

Dear Governor Evans,

The Idaho Chapter, The Wildlife Society, has reviewed actions the State Department of Transportation may take to encourage more commercial traffic on the Idaho portion of U.S. 12. We are opposed to increasing commercial traffic on this highway. Our position on this project is enclosed for your consideration and action.

Sincerely,

James F. Gore, Chairman
Environmental Issues Committee

Enclosure

cf: Congressman Steve Symms
Congressman George Hansen
Senator James McClure
Senator Frank Church
Darrell V. Manning, ID Dept. of Transportation
E. M. Wood, Federal Hwy. Administration
Robert Torheim, Regional Forester

JFGore:tc

POSITION STATEMENT

of
Idaho Chapter, The Wildlife Society
on
Highway Improvements, U.S. Highway 12,
Kooskia, ID to Idaho-Montana Border

U.S. Highway 12 parallels the Middle Fork of the Clearwater River and the Lochsa River from Kooskia to the Idaho-Montana border. The highway is hazardous because it is narrow and winding, and traffic, especially commercial truck traffic, has increased dramatically since 1975 adding to the hazard. Some of the trucks haul chemicals or other hazardous materials. The highway is a popular recreation route and is a portion of the National Bike Centennial Trail. In its present condition, the highway is overstressed and the State of Idaho has proposed to improve portions of the highway to upgrade highway safety.

The Lochsa River and Middle Fork of the Clearwater River paralleled by U.S. Highway 12 east of Kooskia are designated as Recreation Rivers by the National Wild and Scenic River Act of 1968. The rivers provide high value scenery and recreational opportunity and have high quality water and anadromous fish habitat.

The Kooskia to Montana section of U.S. Highway 12 dissects 100,000 acres of elk and deer winter range and has experienced increased road kill of big game since 1976, which corresponds to increased truck traffic. One hundred and thirty big game animals were killed by vehicles along this stretch of highway during the winter of 1978-1979. Most of this loss is attributed to commercial trucks.

Alternate travel routes from the north central states to Lewiston, Idaho for commercial traffic exist via Interstate 90 and U.S. 95. In addition, existing railroad facilities are available for bulk commodities.

With regard to U.S. Highway 12 in Idaho, the position of the Idaho Chapter of The Wildlife Society is to: 1) support the use of alternate routes and/or modes of transportation to move bulk materials in order to reduce the commercial truck volume and associated hazards to human life, wildlife, and potential hazards to the Recreation Rivers adjacent to U.S. 12; 2) oppose improvement projects that will attract greater volumes of commercial truck traffic; and 3) request that an Environmental Impact Statement be prepared if projects are initiated to improve the highway in a way that will attract greater volumes of commercial traffic.

September 27, 1979