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United States Senate

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

(PURSUANT TO S. RES. 267, 93D CONGRESS)

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August 20, 1974

William R. Meiners, President
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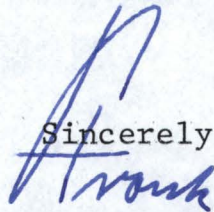
Dear Bill:

Thanks for sharing with me the copy of your July 30th letter to Vern Hamre, the Ogden Regional Forester, commenting on the proposed general management plan for the Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

I appreciate having an opportunity to review your comments.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,



Frank Church

July 30, 1974
7717 Ustick Road
Boise, Idaho 83704

Mr. Vern Hamre
Regional Forester
U.S. Forest Service
324 25th Street
Ogden, Utah 84401

Dear Vern:

I appreciate the opportunity for review of the "Proposed General Management Plan, Sawtooth National Recreation Area, Idaho". There are many fine things said. However they are mostly statements of broad intent, and though desirable of application, are difficult to assess as to their implementation, timing and specific impact within the area. Perhaps one could accept the plan on faith but I do not choose to follow this route. I therefore will list areas of concern that emerge as I review the proposal:

1. Basic assumption, page 55. Being a biologist, the rationale expressed in the lead paragraph, last sentence, disturbs me. Why are the assumptions people rather than resource oriented? How can you manage an ecosystem without predicating use/nonuse upon the capability, constraint or exclusion of such demands as prescribed by the resources?

2. I am lead to believe that maximum recreational opportunity and development is both desirable and is sought to accommodate an ever increasing public demand without constraint. Why cannot a finite resource base be regulated? Lets keep the "mass" of people on the edges; let them peer-in; and, provide "Coney Island" facilities away from the area. Lets keep the area natural with opportunity to walk and camp in a natural setting. This is a wilderness environment that must be maintained to retain its charm, character and uniqueness which have been championed by those who have sought to protect the area. To do otherwise will be to break the faith and despoil the area. Roads, trails, campgrounds, etc., must be held to a minimum and placed as to enhance these intrinsic values, not degrade them.

3. I am acquainted with the Sawtooth National Recreation Area on a rather intimate basis and am not impressed with its timber producing potential. In fact, other than a few isolated areas within the boundaries of the Sawtooth Wilderness, the timber cover assumes a far greater value as watershed cover and other associated values rather than for "commercial" forest purposes. I therefore challenge the projected timber and timber products "harvest" as unrealistic and not in keeping with sound resource management criteria and consideration;

4. Public Law 92-400, Section 2 (a)(3) establishes the limits of applicable natural resource use within the recreation area. Of concern in this regard is domestic livestock grazing as this use is presently a serious threat "substantially impair the purposes for which the recreation area is established". Of particular and significant importance is the immediate and continuing degradation of the aquatic environment and wildlife habitats. Proposed resolution of this grave threat to the anadromous and resident fishery as well as critical wildlife habitats is essentially ignored with only token recommendation made for its correction.

A similar token approach is made relative to the determination and establishment of "resource flows" as a major and "must" element to full realization of comprehensive resource management within the recreation area.

Given the foregoing, Alternative 3 assumes great importance as that alternative providing greatest opportunity for management in the public interest. In practice, a mix of certain recommendations from Alternative 2 could be incorporated to make it even better. Further, water data from the U.S. Geological Survey (which appears to have been overlooked in these materials) should be reviewed and incorporated as appropriate to the final draft statement.

In closing, an additional factor comes to mind. This relates to the proposed construction of your headquarters complex at the mouth of the North Fork of the Wood River. I see no reference in the draft statement relative to its need, construction, etc., nor its impacts. This seems an inappropriate action at this time pending final Congressional review and determination of management for the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and the adjacent Pioneer Mountains.

Sincerely,

William R. Meiners, President
Idaho Chapter The Wildlife Society