

To the Editor:

I approve, in most instances, of Congressman Stallings' actions as my representative in the United States House of Representatives. This letter addresses only Congressman Stallings' sponsorship of a bill to create a national park in Southeast Idaho to include Craters of the Moon, the Great Rift, Crystal Ice Caves, the King's Bowl and the Arco Volcanic Rift, which includes the Big Southern Butte.

I do not address the issue of grazing because I am not directly affected by it. I believe the Idaho Cattleman's Association and sheepman's organizations are very capable of protecting their rights or potential loss thereof.

My initial dissatisfaction with the bill lies in the fact that, to the best of my knowledge, there are no national parks in the United States wherein hunting is allowed. In my opinion, the above mentioned area contains some of the best sage grouse hunting in Southeast Idaho. Some of the best antelope trophies in the State also hide out in this area. We have already provided a sanctuary for these beautiful animals at the INEL. Setting aside an additional 200,000 acres for a national park would effectively eliminate antelope hunting within a reasonable distance of the majority of the population of Southeast Idaho. Anyone who has hunted antelope anywhere near the boundaries of the INEL knows that after the first few shots, every antelope in the vicinity is on the INEL. I am certain the same would apply to any antelope within running distance of a new national park.

Believe me, those antelope can run a very long distance in a very short time.

Although not as often seen, and rarely hunted, many magnificent buck deer make this area their home. Also, a small elk herd is currently using the area, but can now only be hunted under traditional Indian treaty rights. These rights will probably be abrogated since the land in question will become "occupied" (if I am using the term correctly). Also, what will happen to the spring hunting by nimrods anxious to try their eye and skill on rock chucks or coyotes? Or to those hardy individuals who enjoy snowmobiling in the area?

The question stands, will the National Park Service, regardless of what is included in this bill, allow rifles and shotguns to be discharged in an area occupied by tourists? Only look at what happened recently in the City of Rocks. Prohibition of hunting would be an absolute necessity and the Park Service would be derelict in its duties if it failed to enforce such a required regulation. Imagine the lawsuits should a tourist be accidentally shot.

Another area of concern is that most of the access roads into this area (of which there are many) would be closed. The only roads which could be used would be paved. Not every tourist has a motorcycle, ATV, or a four wheel drive vehicle. If this proposed national park becomes reality, development of the area would surely follow, including park administration facilities, rest areas, paved roads, service stations, restaurants and gift

shops. This all takes big money nowadays and where would the National Park Service get the money? From our pockets, of course.

I believe there is an organization (I confess I do not recall the name) which has for several years tried to get someone to build an all weather road from the Burley/Twin Falls area to the INEL. The stated purpose of the road was to allow persons from that area access to potential jobs at the INEL. If this is one of Congressman Stallings' reasons for initiating the bill, I suggest it will cost him many more votes than he gains due to both the cost and loss of free access to the area.

I am quite familiar with much of the area proposed for the park. I cross country hike throughout it on very frequent occasions for the peace and quiet it affords - no traffic signals, no one telling me do this or do that (although BLM does pose some restrictions), alone with my thoughts, or if I desire, no thoughts at all. I believe that if the area becomes a national park, rangers will be stationed on high points to whistle or herd you back onto the paved roads or approved trails should you stray from them. Perhaps rattlesnake patrols will have to be established to shoo the snakes known as the "gentlemen of the desert" away from the trails in order to protect the unknowledgeable or foolish tourist who, upon encountering one, would probably attempt to take a closeup picture of the noisy little fellow. Seriously, I must admit I occasionally kill a rattlesnake. These are, however, only the bushwhackers - those

snakes that insist on exploding with noisy buzzing right under my feet in the middle of a thick bunch of sagebrush, which, in turn, causes me to walk briefly on top of said sagebrush. I leave alone the "gentleman" snake who announces his presence 10 to 15 feet away from me and politely requests that I not disturb him further.

In closing, I must say I do not desire a private walking preserve. At the present time, I believe the Idaho Fish and Game Department, with its water guzzlers, and the Bureau of Land Management are doing a very creditable job of managing the area and its wildlife. I would also like to give credit to those ranchers who provide water to the animals in this area. In late summer, the water becomes very scarce. Yes, this may be incidental to supplying water for their flocks and herds, but who would replace them? I do not want to be regulated out of one of the last large uninhabited and easily accessible areas in Southeast Idaho by the National Park Service. The Park Service must place many restrictions on the area in order to protect and police the tourists. I believe the negative aspects of such a park heavily outweigh any economic benefits which may (and I emphasize, may) accrue to Southeast Idaho.

To quote an old Arab proverb - "Once the camel has his nose in the tent, the rest of him soon follows."

If you agree with me, please make your views known to Congressman Stallings.

*J. E. Horton*

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address on file

CW4, USA (Ret)  
553 E. Pine  
Pocatello, Idaho 83201