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Senator Larry Craig/Mike Simpson
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Craig/*craps*Simpson:

The Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society is a group of over 250 professional wildlife biologists concerned with the sound management and stewardship of all of Idaho's wildlife. On behalf of our Chapter, I urge you to support through co-sponsorship of S. 25, the Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1999 (CARA). This bill was introduced earlier this year with broad bipartisan support. CARA aims to share federal Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas revenue with states through three program areas: assisting coastal states in addressing impacts associated with OCS activity and advancing coastal environmental efforts (Title I); providing land-based and urban recreation through the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery program (Title II); and addressing the unmet needs of state-based wildlife conservation, education and recreation programs (Title III).

We are particularly interested in Title III of this legislation. As wildlife professionals, we confront greater conservation challenges than ever before as increasing demands on lands and resources threaten to edge out America's wildlife and wild places. Today, we are encountering new losses of songbirds, amphibians, fish, and other "nongame" species that gathered little notice until recently. While state wildlife agencies have demonstrated their ability to bring back once critically low populations of both game and nongame species, they have lacked the funding to repeat the success stories and reverse these alarming trends to protect our nation's rich wildlife heritage for future generations.

The Idaho Chapter of The Wildlife Society is asking for your support and co-sponsorship of CARA for the following reasons:

1. Conservation simply can't wait - proactive steps must be taken now to conserve Idaho's irreplaceable wildlife legacy **before** it becomes necessary to list more species as threatened or endangered. Conservation efforts that preclude the need to list species just make biological and economic sense.
2. Outdoor recreation demands are skyrocketing, yet many wildlife populations are decreasing. We must find the means to accommodate the needs of the many interest groups who wish to enjoy Idaho's great outdoors without compromising the wildlife and habitats they depend upon.
3. Our children are the nation's future stewards and they must be provided the educational tools to decide what their natural world will be like.
4. A wildlife-rich outdoor experience is one of Idaho's great economic assets; one that is becoming increasingly vital to local communities and our states' nature-based tourism and related outdoor industry.
5. State fish and wildlife agencies can point to a strong track record of on-the-ground successes for game and sport fish with longstanding programs under Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson/Wallop-Breaux Acts. With the addition of CARA, Idaho can further expand this effort by focusing on the 80% of wildlife species in Idaho that are classified as nongame.

CARA represents a good, solid starting point upon which to forge a new model for funding more inclusive state wildlife conservation, recreation and education efforts. Additionally, CARA solves a significant funding dilemma because it addresses the issue of providing some public funding for wildlife conservation efforts, rather than placing the bulk of the responsibility on hunters and anglers as has historically been the case.

The Idaho Chapter of The Wildlife Society strongly encourages the following improvements to Title III: (1) Raise the percentage of OCS revenue dedicated to Title III purposes in S. 25 up to 10 percent as it currently stands in H.R. 701; (2) Place greater emphasis on nongame wildlife, the wildlife most in need of conservation attention.

We applaud the efforts of those members of Congress who crafted the proposal and hope that you will recognize the value your support will have to the economy and natural resources of Idaho should CARA successfully pass. Once again, your support and co-sponsorship of this legislation would be very much appreciated.

Sincerely,