

STATEMENT OF HONORABLE JAMES A. McCLURE TO PARKS AND RECREATION  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON S. 2233, APRIL 23, 1974

Mr. Chairman, nearly three years ago when I had the privilege of representing Idaho's First Congressional District in the House of Representatives, I polled my constituents about the future of the Middle Snake River. At that time, Congress was considering a moratorium on the construction of any further dams in that section of the Snake. The results of the 1971 poll silenced any lingering doubts that Idahoans -- at least those in the First District -- were much opposed to any further dam construction.

When this subcommittee held field hearings in Lewiston last December on the legislation now before us, several witnesses insisted that a shift in sentiment had occurred among Idahoans most concerned about the Middle Snake. So, I sent out another questionnaire -- this time, statewide -- last month. The questions posed were basically the same as asked three years ago. The first series of questions dealt with dams on the Middle Snake and the moratorium proposed by my predecessor, Senator Len Jordan. Then I asked about the other alternatives -- a wild river designation, a national recreation area. The next questions concerned the effect of a wilderness area designation on the lands surrounding the Middle Snake. Some questions reflected the special problems that might arise -- the effect on the timber industry or the use of motor boats. The final question asked whether or not there was concern about the effects of Middle Snake decisions on the use of river water in the Upper Snake River Basin. My staff has now completed tabulating the returned ballots, and the figures this time around are somewhat different. I will place no interpretation on them at this time, except to point out where the most obvious changes have occurred.

At the conclusion of my remarks, I will submit for the record the results of the 1971 survey and the latest poll, with the tabulation broken down by Congressional



district.

I want to commence by comparing the figures in the 1971 poll with those in the First Congressional District this year. The first series of questions went to the heart of the matter: "Do you oppose construction of any dams on the Middle Snake? Do you favor going ahead with a dam now? Do you think we may need a dam sometime but not now?" The results show that opposition to dam construction dropped in three years, from 72% to 53% -- a drop, to be sure, but still a clearcut majority opinion against dams, just the same. The subcommittee may find some meaning in the numerical change in the number of "no's" to the question of going ahead with a dam now. Those responding in the negative three years ago totalled about 73%. This time the figure was 49%. Similarly, those who think we will not need a dam at a later point in time dropped from 55% in 1971 to 39% in 1974.

A moratorium on dams was favored by 69% in the first poll, but only 33% this time, while opposition to a moratorium has more than doubled.

Three years ago, two-thirds of those responding would have supported designation of the Middle Snake as a Wild River. By 1974, the figure had dropped to 44%. As a matter of fact, a higher number (47%) checked the "no" box this time.

The sentiment concerning a national recreation area is the one matter that barely changed in the intervening years. On the other hand, when it came to designation of the lands surrounding the Middle Snake as a Wilderness Area, the figures reversed themselves.

In the earlier poll, a wilderness designation was favored, 56% to 38%. This time, however, the residents in the First District rejected the idea 37% to 54%.

Three years ago, views were evenly divided on barring motor boats from the river. In the 1974 poll, motor boat enthusiasts prevailed by a two-to-one margin.

The last question read: "Would you favor preservation of the Middle Snake if it limits water use in the Upper Snake Basin?" In 1971, respondents split 55% yes,



36% no. But in the current survey, the First District reversed itself with 35% saying yes and 51% no. Perhaps this reflects a growing concern for food production and rising food prices.

Mr. Chairman, as you are aware, we must take special note of the views of Idaho's First District at this time because this is the area most directly affected by the decisions we make on this measure, except in the use of the water of the Snake River which more directly and vitally affects the people in Idaho's Second Congressional District. I would like to point out some of the areas where the results of my survey show that sentiment between the two districts is different. One of the major differences showed up in the very first question "Do you oppose construction of any dams on the Middle Snake?" Whereas the First District replied yes (53% to 34%), the Second District said no (37% to 47%).

The question of a national recreation area was also interesting. Whereas the split between the pros and cons was fairly close in the First District, there were 21 percentage points separating them in the Second District, with the "no's" prevailing 35% to 56%. And the people of the Second District are even more adamant in opposing any decision which affects upstream water rights, 62% to 28%.

Mr. Chairman, approximately 12,000 concerned Idahoans have recorded their views on this matter. They did so in the hope that our committee would not forget that whatever its ultimate decision may be, it is going to have a far-reaching, long-term effect on the people of my State. In the hope that the results of my questionnaire will assist this body in arriving at an equitable solution, I submit the tabulation of results for the record at this time.