

Symms calls for cap on Idaho Wilderness

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U.S. Rep. Steve Symms said he would oppose the U.S. Sen. Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness proposal that calls for 2.2 million acres and re-emphasized his stand for a 3.5 million acre cap.

The Church bill this week passed the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and now goes to the Senate.

Symms said he was informed by the Rep. Morris Udall, D-Ariz. chairman of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, that the Church bill would have the top priority in the House.

Symms said he had long advocated the 3.5 million acre cap, which includes 1.4 million acres of RARE II and the River of No Return, 1.5 million acres existing wilderness and perhaps another half million more for further RARE II or other uses.

He observed his 1.4 million

acres for RARE II and River of No Return Wilderness is substantially under the 2.2 acre feet contained in the Church proposal.

Protect Wilderness

"I'm for protecting the Idaho Primitive Wilderness Area and the Salmon breaks," said Symms. "I'm not in favor of the piecemeal approach. It seems each time there is a study in the recreation area some strip of land is taken out."

Symms pointed out there are 52 million acres of land in Idaho but 10 million acres, or about a fifth, is under consideration for wilderness, RARE II, River of No Return Wilderness and BLM study.

"Even Secretary of Interior Cecil Andrus has remarked that Idaho should not contribute more to wilderness than its fair share," said Symms.

Symms applauded Sen. Jim McClure's move to fight the Church bill on the Senate floor



U.S. Rep. Steve Symms

for two specific amendments.

He said he favors those

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amendments that would designate by law some lands as multiple use which were specifically excluded from the proposed wilderness area; and create a Conservation Management Area on about 50,000 acres in the Panther Creek area where a portion of America's only known cobalt reserve is located.

Symms added he would go even further in resolving an issue on the south side of the Idaho Primitive Area, including the Warren Planning Unit, and that he would want instant release language on multiple use for such areas.

Symms also contended the Church bill would close sawmills at Horseshoe Bend, Emmett and McCall by designating too much land for wilderness.

Symms, who plans to run for the Church Senate seat, said in The Post-Register interview, that the lumbering land closures in the Gospel Hump

area of Idaho County threaten to close the Elks City mill.

"Democratic influence is bringing about a large single use, rather than multiple use in Idaho's forests," he contended. "They want a minimum of multiple use but a maximum of single use, he contended.

"I like to backpack in Idaho but I want to see the people have a chance to live and work in Idaho," said Symms. I feel my position is reasonable."

Symms was in Idaho Falls Thursday night for a "Meet with Symms Rally" at the Elks Lodge and to contact party leaders Thursday and Friday.