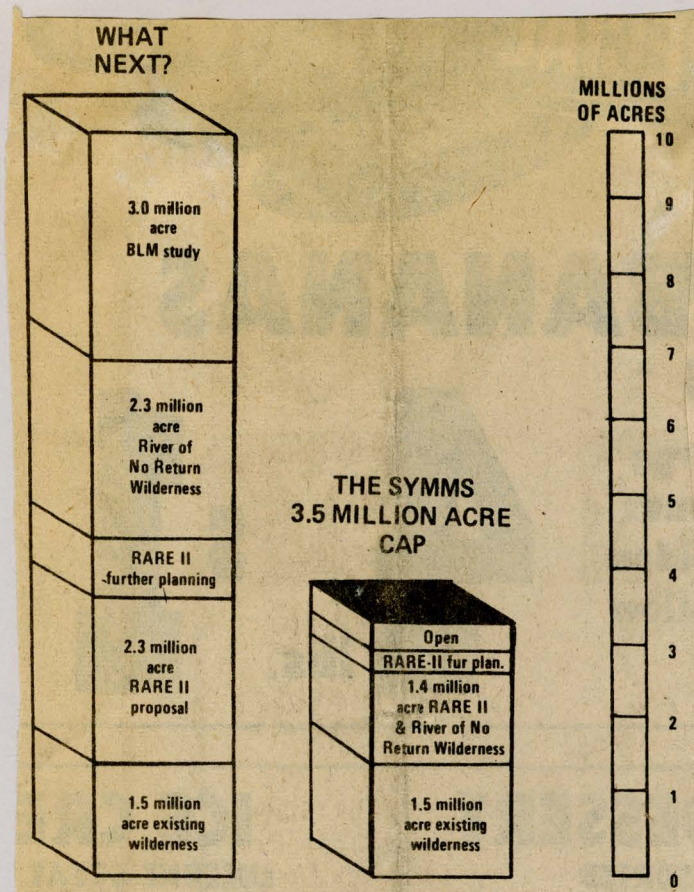

Idaho's wilderness

U.S. REP. STEVE SYMMS, R-Idaho, proposes what he calls a 3.5 million acre cap for Idaho Wilderness area. The chart shows the breakdown of his proposal in the center, compared with the various proposals on the left and the 10 million acre dimensions on the right. The 10 million acres are almost a fifth of the 52 million acres in Idaho.

Symms faces uphill wilderness fight

Sun. Nov 18 1979

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

U.S. Rep. Steve Symms, a probable senatorial contender, acknowledged this his so-called cap of 3.5 million acres for Idaho Wilderness likely won't be realized.

Symms holds a key spot as member of the House Committee on Agriculture and the House Interior and Insular Affairs committees. He is the ranking minority member of the House energy and environment subcommittee.

Symms, viewed as one of the leaders of House ultra-conservatives, is vice chairman of the House Republican Study Committee and board member of the American Conservative Union.

He said in a Post-Register interview he expects to announce for the seat presently held by Democratic U.S. Sen. Frank Church no later than Jan. 26.

Symms said the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee chairman, Rep. Morris Udall, D-Ariz., told him that church's Idaho Wilderness proposal would receive top consideration after it passed the Senate.

Opposes Carter

Symms said he violently opposed the 10.1 million acres of wilderness proposed by the Carter Administration, adding the wilderness area in Idaho now is about 1.5 million acres.

Introduces bills

He has introduced one piece of legislation expanding the wilderness area to 2.9 million and a second one that would set the ceiling at 3.5 million.

The bills, he stressed, call for an instant release of land used for multiple purposes by the U.S. Forest Service — land that is not designated as wilderness or set aside for further study.

His 3.5 million ceiling would include 1.4 million acres of RARE II and River of No Return Wilderness, another 1.5 million acres of existing wilderness and possibly another 500,000 acres for further RARE II and their protective designation.

Symms said he opposes Church bill, fearing it would close lumber mill operations in the Hoseshoe Bend, Emmett, McCall and Elk River areas.