

Andrus environmental views now less rigid

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The views of Secretary of Interior Cecil D. Andrus have moderated on environmental matters since he assumed the cabinet post four years ago.

When Idaho governor for the six years preceding the ascent of present Gov. John V. Evans four years ago, the genial Andrus was known in political circles as somewhat of an environmentalist, although not near as extreme as some of his political enemies would have you believe.

Andrus was and still is a firm believer in clean air and water, but his thinking has moved towards more development of timber and mining resources since becoming secretary of the interior.

There are Alaskans who would challenge this assessment as they bitterly charge Andrus spearheaded "locking up" vast areas of Alaska that could be commercially developed for oil, lumber and mining.

In his visit to Idaho last weekend he surprised some of his followers by stating that Idaho had received more than its fair share of lands designated for wilderness preservation,

including some that should have not been placed in that category.

He said President Carter's recommendations of 1.52 million acres of Idaho wilderness contained portions that probably should not have been included as wilderness. He mentioned specifically the areas of the Magruder Corridor and Meadow Creek drainage, both in Idaho County, which he said could have probably been better suited for multiple use than for permanent wilderness.

Governor Evans, for example, recommended about 1,200,000 acres, slightly below what Carter listed. However, the governor has recommended other designations.

Andrus praised the president for his efforts in seeking to bring to a close the eight-year-long RARE process. He also denied that there was any "sell-out" by the president to the timber interests. He lauded him as the first president in many years trying to get the long controversy resolved.

Andrus, of course, wants the U.S. Forestry Service transferred to the interior department from the Department of Agriculture, not because he wanted the power as many have charged but because he

honestly believed that's where it properly belongs for a proposed new Department of Natural Resources.

He said he feels the plan is designed to produce more lumber, not less. To achieve that end, he added, there needs to be a consensus on a general policy for management.

His conclusion constituted a general call for a nationwide land-use plan for all public lands under one roof. He said this would result in a more efficient and effective use of those public resources.

Andrus has never deviated from his stand as a strong believer in nuclear power development. He added the recent accidents at the Three Mile Island nuclear plant in Pennsylvania haven't ended his support for the concept of nuclear power plants.

He added it just points out that the design and safety mechanism must be followed exactly, and that's where the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory's role can be enlarged.

He also maintained the same views in insisting that federal agencies should begin to remove stored nuclear waste from the INEL.

He pointed out that in 1970, it was promised that radioactive waste stored at the INEL would be removed from Idaho by the end of the decade, and this time is now almost at hand.

Andrus marked an achievement by drawing 72 percent of the votes against a formidable opponent in the 1974 gubernatorial elections. He beat Republican Lt. Gov. Jack Murphy at that time, winning every county except Lemhi. The fact he was a Democrat in such a heavily Republican state as Idaho is all the more remarkable.

His victory over incumbent Republican Gov. Don Samuelson in 1970 has given the Democrats a stranglehold on the executive office, which Evans continued in the 1978 election.

Andrus has repeatedly said he has no desire to return to Washington when he finishes his service as secretary of interior, whether it be in 1980, or in 1984 if President Carter is re-elected and wants Andrus to continue.

This rules him out as a possible formidable senatorial or congressional contender, but he could return in the gubernatorial role if Democrat Evans should fail in 1982, which is not likely. Of course, he would never oppose Evans.