



STATE OF IDAHO
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
BOISE

CECIL D. ANDRUS
GOVERNOR

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TESTIMONY OF GOVERNOR CECIL D. ANDRUS

BEFORE THE U. S. FOREST SERVICE

THE IDAHO PRIMITIVE AREA
THE SALMON RIVER BREAKS PRIMITIVE AREA
THE SALMON RIVER

TESTIMONY OF GOVERNOR CECIL D. ANDRUS -- IDAHO

Whenever an issue is controversial, the facts tend to be disguised by emotion, misinterpretation, prejudice and exaggeration. The issues of this hearing - two Idaho Primitive Areas and the Salmon River - are controversial and the facts have been disguised.

In past weeks, the term "wilderness" has been used interchangeably with the words lock-up, single use, parks for the wealthy, playgrounds for easterners, anti-economy, anti-industry, anti-development and a variety of other depressive descriptions. Such has been the rhetoric of those who oppose the wilderness concept.

To place the reclassification issue in perspective, let us first recognize what wilderness really means to Idaho and Idaho people.

Wilderness is hunting and fishing; clean air and clean water. Wilderness is big game habitat; salmon and steelhead spawning in the waters of untouched streams and creeks.

Wilderness is Idaho the way it was; or more clearly, a small portion of Idaho that should remain the way it was for future generations. Wilderness is a compromise between those who would develop every acre and those who would develop none. And, most of all, wilderness is a positive step toward keeping the State of Idaho from ever resembling the shambles of congestion and misery of Southern California and the east coast.

Another concept in question today is the meaning of multiple use laws that guide the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

Multiple use does not mean that every acre should be logged, every acre mined, every acre grazed, nor every acre withheld for recreation. Some areas might best be used for one thing; some for another. This is compatible with the intent of the multiple use acts. Yet, the first argument against every wilderness proposal is a plea for multiple use. Those who persist in that argument have a narrow view of the multiple use acts of 1960 and 1964.

For example, surface mining is the reverse of multiple use. The Boise Basin is a perfect illustration. After 100 years, much of it still provides virtually no grazing, no timber, no watershed, no hunting, no fishing - nothing, in fact, but piles and piles of cobblestones.

Clear cut logging, now called "even age management" by the timber industry, is another example of single use management. Good logging is beneficial. It is a major part of the state's heritage and economic backbone. But there are areas that should not be logged at all, and there are areas that should not be logged by present methods.

Consider the multiple use of a wilderness area. While it is called "single use" by those who hope to harvest the timber or extract the minerals, wilderness is actually one of the best examples of the multiple use philosophy. Fishermen, hunters, hikers, photographers, riders, researchers, boaters, floaters, tubers, campers - all are accommodated by a wilderness area.

However, another value, watershed protection, may be the most important use of all.

The Middle Fork watershed contributes to all the other values, and the tributary system of the Middle Fork is, by itself, one of Idaho's most valuable treasures.

Two perfect watershed examples run roughly parallel to each other in central Idaho. One is the Middle Fork of the Salmon, the other the South Fork. The Middle Fork, flowing north through the Idaho Primitive Area is so pure and natural, one of my friends claims you can count the spots on a trout 20 feet beneath the surface of a still pool. The South Fork also flows north, but that river is outside the western boundary of the primitive area.

Those who fished both streams 40 years ago know that the South Fork was an excellent salmon and steelhead stream, comparable to the Middle Fork. In addition, the South Fork was loaded with native Salmon River cutthroat trout, locally called "redside." After a day on the trail, you could go down to the river and catch all the trout you could eat for dinner in ten or fifteen minutes. Look at the South Fork now. Only a few redsides remain and very few salmon and steelhead. Why? Because too much of the fragile soil, loose granitic sand, washed down into the river as a result of logging and roading in a relatively small portion of the South Fork watershed. Silt filled the pools. It smothered the riffles that provided food for the trout and covered the gravel spawning areas for the salmon and steelhead. The results are obvious. Few fish have survived.

Much of the Middle Fork flows through the same steep, decomposed granite country as the South Fork. Road it and log it and you lose it.

The water quality of the Middle Fork of the Salmon is considered the best in America for rivers comparable in size. Only the uninformed challenge its integrity as a superb river system.

Since a Wilderness or Wild and Scenic River can be created by an act of Congress, it is important to note that an act of Congress can also change classifications in future years.

If the day should come when we are forced to use the timber resources of the wilderness, Congress can so decide. But, for now, wilderness keeps our options open and our children and grandchildren can make the ultimate decision.

Economic growth and general prosperity have advanced at an unprecedented rate during the past three years. Yet, the Idaho and Salmon River Breaks Primitive Areas have been managed as wilderness since 1931 and 1936 respectively. Nobody has been hurt. Nobody has been put out of a job because these lands have been managed as Primitive Areas by the Forest Service. In fact, many new jobs have been created and local economies have prospered as a result of the attraction to wild lands.

Similarly, the Salmon River has been managed just as it would be under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. I support formal classification of the Main Salmon, with each section given the highest rating for which it can qualify. In this regard, the State of Idaho did join with the Forest Service in drafting the Salmon River proposal being addressed at this hearing.

In view of the difficulty involved in verbally describing the boundaries of my wilderness proposal, I am today submitting a detailed map encompassing some 1.8 million acres.

My proposal seeks to add several areas essential to the wilderness system, above and beyond those lands already included in the primitive areas. The motivation for such is one of concern for the quality of the tributary system for the Middle Fork. Many key streams which flow into the Middle Fork are mostly outside the primitive area boundaries. However, I favor retaining all existing uses of those inclusion areas which do not adversely affect the water quality of the tributary system. Likewise, I support retention of jet boat and aircraft use of the wilderness areas as allowed under the provisions of the Wilderness Act.

While I commend the Forest Service for an excellent wilderness proposal, I am firmly opposed to two major exclusions proposed by the Forest Service. I cannot accept the exclusions on Big Creek and Monumental Creek because both streams are vital for the continued strength of the Salmon River anadromous fishery.

The economy of the state can continue to thrive without developing the 3.4 percent of Idaho involved in our wilderness proposal. However, I will continue to work closely with the Forest Service and the Idaho timber industry to maintain a healthy economy by improving allowable harvests on forest lands outside of the proposed wilderness boundaries.

Much of today's pressure on the timber industry is directly related to the failure of the Forest Service to replant logged land, the general absence of timber land improvement and reductions in the Forest Service budget which leads one to conclude that too much emphasis is placed on cutting timber, and not enough on long term growth and sustained yield.

Finally, it occurs to me that this hearing process may be the most important public forum in a decade in terms of impact on Idaho's future. We can have the best of both worlds if we use our heads.

Cecil D. Andrus
Governor