

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE STEVEN D. SYMMS  
REPUBLICAN OF THE FIRST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF IDAHO  
BEFORE THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE  
ON INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES

MAY 15, 1973

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate this opportunity to testify before your subcommittee about the financial needs of the Forest Service. As you undoubtedly know, I represent a Congressional District in Idaho which relies heavily on our national forests to sustain its wood products industry. In addition, I serve on the House Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Forests which has a great deal of responsibility for our national forest management goals and policy.

Anyone who has read a newspaper lately, or tried to buy a home that fits both the space and budget needs of their family, or tried to pick up a few miscellaneous pieces of lumber for remodeling, knows that this nation is facing the most critical timber supply situation in our history. If you really want to see economic despair brought about by this crisis, talk to one of the 140 men recently fired by a major lumber production company in my State. Those men have spent their lives working in Idaho's forest product industry, but the timber crisis make chances of finding another job almost nil.

It's easy as a Member of Congress to stand up and point an accusing finger at the Forest Service for all our trials and tribulations. It's their responsibility to see that an adequate harvest is available to support the American appetite for wood products. We can simply say they've failed, and if we don't look into the matter any further, we can all go home and rest in peace -- knowing that Congress has its heart in the right place, but Smokey the Bear let us down.

I think, gentlemen, that if any one of us decides today to take that kind of easy out -- to head for our homes and let the Forest Service take the blame -- we're going to find the American public camped on our doorstep and ready to rout us out of our pipe dreams with pitchforks. It's Congress and the Administration that has crippled the Forest Service and tied their hands behind their backs. We did it and we have to undo it.

If you will think back for a few minutes to the newspaper headlines of the early 1970's, you will remember a few often-quoted scientists predicting that America would pollute itself right out of existence in our own lifetimes. You will remember that some were talking about our natural resources in the same language you would use to describe the crime situation in downtown Washington, D.C. -- mountainsides were being "raped" of their mineral resources; forests were being "robbed" of major components of their eco-systems; pollution of our rivers was "murdering" aquatic populations; industry was "abusing" the environment in much the same way a mother would attack her own child.

Words like "rape", "robbery", "murder", and "abuse" used in big, bold, black headlines to describe the face of the American continent scared the socks off the American public. What resulted was a headlong rush into federal environmental control that was based not on technology, or common sense, or with regard to consumer needs -- but based on pure hysteria. The demand for wood products didn't cease, but suddenly the man who cut a tree to meet that need was committing a crime no less serious than murdering his wife. Any legislator guilty of publicly calling for sound management of resources -- management that included harvesting of resources -- was a dirty scoundrel. His name made the Hall of Fame in the leading environmental magazines and he was marked for political annihilation in the next election.

The bureaucrats downtown were finely tuned to this kind of public reaction. It scared them to death, too, along with those who were running for public office. In not too many months, bureaus responsible for management of our natural resources -- including the Forest Service -- were paralyzed by the over-reaction to America's wakening to the danger of pollution and misuse of resources. The effects of that overdose are just beginning to wear off.

We are at a point today where we can begin to redefine our goals for timber management. Essentially, it boils down to a simple formula: adequate growth to meet future timber needs, adequate harvest to meet

present timber needs, and prompt reforestation. In that respect, the business of forestry isn't greatly different from any other type of farming operation. It's the old principle that what is taken from the land must be replaced.

But in forestry, the management principles are complicated by a number of factors. The nation's public forests are an integral part of our outdoor recreation system. They must be kept in a condition which meets the public need for aesthetic enjoyment, fishing and hunting, camping and hiking, picnicking, and sanitary facilities. By the same token, none of these human activities can be allowed to impair the quality of the forest in its role of maintaining fish and wildlife populations, watershed and soil conservation, and proper growth cycles.

In Idaho, there is growing concern over the new classification of forest lands for wilderness, both under the Wilderness Act and the Wild and Scenic Rivers program. I believe we stamped into those programs as yet another over-reaction to the environmental question. The results have been detrimental for the most part. And even though we have succeeded in locking away timber acreage in its "natural" state, I'm finding few families who can afford to take advantage of those wilderness experiences. They just can't afford either the equipment or the time it takes to backpack into some of our wilderness areas.

What is happening to those wilderness areas themselves is a pretty sad story. Locked away as they are, with no roads for access and no provision for orderly removal of mature timber, vast acreages of trees are over-aging, dying, and rotting on the forest floor -- choking out the forest undergrowth. As the insects multiply rapidly on this feast of rotting timber, they spread to young, healthy trees. As the forests deteriorate, forest fire hits, but, without roads, our rangers have little access to successfully fight those fires and prevent them from spreading.

From this Congress came some fine, high-sounding descriptions of the aesthetic grandeur of the new wilderness areas when the program was being considered. But it doesn't work out that way, gentlemen. Land

managed by the Forest Service has in effect already been "classified" and the Forest Service should be allowed to use any or all tools of good management to achieve the best multiple use objectives for each section of the forests. "Wilderness" simply limits the management options. It's a little like hiring a new staff member in my office and assigning a job -- but prohibiting the use of the telephone and the typewriter to get the job done.

And so, today, I am suggesting that we must determine what our national goal is for public forest lands and we must provide from the Congress the necessary tools to achieve that goal. There is one main ingredient in that task without which no progress will be made. Money.

Because the Forest Service has had some serious problems over the years, a large cross-section of the American public would receive news of its abolishment with relief. But that's a short-sighted remedy. Somebody has to manage those forests, and we don't have time to set up a new bureaucracy and suffer through its growing pains. We have in the Forest Service an established group of dedicated, highly-trained technicians who know how to do their job and do it right. But they cannot achieve goals set forth by the American people without the right to exercise their technical judgment and the money to follow through on their decisions.

This is not the forum in which long-range forest policy will be decided, but I do want you to be aware of the concepts I intend to bring up before the Forests Subcommittee:

--Timber is a major crop in America, and the Forest Service is the largest manager of America's timber resources. The American people have a right to expect good management and harvesting on a sustained high yield basis. We should not cut more than we grow, but we cannot continue to allow good timber to go to waste as billions of board feet are now deteriorating. For example, last year more good timber was destroyed by the tussock moth than we exported to Japan.

--The American public has the right and should help to make decisions about overall use of the forests, but we can no longer afford to see good

technical judgment of the Forest Service frustrated and defeated by public whims.

--If the federal government is going to insist on being in a revenue-producing business like timber farming, we must set up that operation along sound business guidelines. Revenues produced from that business should revert to renewal of our timber inventory. This should be done with the establishment of a Trust Fund. Even with a Timber Trust Fund, increased federal funding would be needed to grapple with the related activities of recreation, fish and wildlife, and watershed.

If you gentlemen have followed my philosophy and voting record in the House of Representatives, you know that I have gained a reputation for "The Fastest 'No' in the West" when it comes to extending government powers and expending the taxpayers' money. Keeping that record in mind, I will tell you that if you decide today to double the budget request before you for the Forest Service, you will have my wholehearted support. We are sinking further and further behind in maintaining the national forests. Before you today is a tremendous opportunity to undo much of the damage we have inflicted on those forests and the communities that rely on timber for their economies.

There is one item in that budget that relates directly to Idaho, and before I close, I do want to make mention of it.

In years past, this Congress has seen fit to appropriate money for the establishment and on-going work of the U.S. Forest Research Laboratory located at the University of Idaho in Moscow. Their program is before you again now for appropriation to operate Phase II. An important part of Phase II will be research on the larch casebearer insect infestation threatening forests in the Pacific Northwest. Damage to the larch standing timber supply in Idaho alone is now estimated at \$3-million a year.

Gentlemen, let's not fall into the traditional federal economic trap on this one. This government has been guilty time and time again of pinching pennies in appropriations which would prevent a disaster, and then

following up with twice the amount requested in order to clean up the results.

Your support now of the Laboratory will pay off with big dividends over the years.

Thank you for listening to me. If I have been critical of my colleagues in the Congress and of the government in general, let me assure you that I, too, accept full responsibility for what has happened to our national forests. But let's all stop paying lip service to the problem and get down to the business of putting the Forest Service back on its feet and allowing it to really apply its technical skills and resources to manage our nation's forests.

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JUN 4 1973

Washington, D. C. 20250

*much on wilderness*

May 23, 1973

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Honorable Steven D. Symms  
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Symms:

Many thanks for handing me a copy of your May 15 statement before the House Appropriations Subcommittee. It is an excellent description of the financial needs of the Forest Service and I am sending copies to our people in the field so that they will know of your position.

Your strong interest is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

John R. McGuire

JOHN R. MCGUIRE  
Chief

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Intermountain Forest &  
Range Experiment Station