

COMMENTS ON
WILDERNESS BILL

The Forest Service proposal to establish a wilderness area from the existing Selway-Bitterroot Primitive Area should not be confused with the Wilderness Bill (S.174).

The bill (S.174) has been introduced to the 87th United States Congress by Senator Clinton Anderson, of New Mexico, and is now being considered by the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, of which Senator Anderson is Chairman. Public hearings on the bill were held February 27 and 28 in Washington, D. C. The Interior and Insular Affairs Committee has been asked to hold hearings in the West but has refused to do so.

If passed, the bill (S.174) would provide legislation to establish a National Wilderness Preservation System which would include lands estimated to total at least 55,000,000 acres, or an area larger than the state of Idaho (53,476,000 acres). Included would be all wilderness, wild, primitive and canoe areas in national forests; roadless areas larger than 5,000 acres in national parks and monuments; and all parts of national wildlife refuges and game ranges as the Secretary of Interior may recommend. S.174 appears harmless on the surface, but if passed it would create many difficult problems. Some reasons for opposing it are:

1. Wilderness areas have their rightful place in multiple use land management. However, if S.174 is passed, too much land having high values for other uses would be classified for the severely limited use of wilderness.

2. If the bill becomes law, all existing primitive areas in national forests (totaling $7\frac{1}{2}$ million acres) would be automatically thrown into the national wilderness system, without approval of the Chief of the U. S. Forest Service or the Secretary of Agriculture, and without adequate study of which areas truly qualify for wilderness and which areas have a higher value for integrated multiple use management. If this bill is passed, the entire present Selway-Bitterroot Primitive Area (1,875,300 acres) would go into the wilderness system, in spite of Forest Service proposals for reduction in size.

3. While the bill (S.174) provides for review of these national forest primitive areas within fifteen years after passage of the act, the burden of proof for justified exclusions from wilderness rests upon the Secretary of Agriculture. The Secretary may recommend changes to the President, who in return is required to notify Congress of his recommendations. The President's recommendations will then become effective only if Congress does not pass a resolution opposed to the President's proposals. Such complex and unwieldy legislation can only serve to confuse the wilderness issue and unnecessarily delay a reasonable, sound, intelligent analysis of the overall situation.

4. Wilderness regulations prohibit the building of roads, the harvesting of timber, the establishment of resorts, summer homes and hunting lodges, and similar uses. While these regulations are necessary to preserve wilderness values, if they are enforced on all the commercial forest lands in national forest primitive areas, serious economic losses will result. These losses will be particularly felt by local communities.

5. There are millions of acres of good commercial forest in these primitive areas (932,300 in the Selway-Bitterroot alone). Much of this timber is just as potentially accessible as on similar lands outside primitive and wilderness areas. This timber is needed to maintain the existing sawmills in localities adjacent to the primitive areas and to provide jobs for the expanding population.

6. S.174 is unnecessary. The wilderness areas in national parks are already assured, and the Forest Service has demonstrated its determination to reclassify adequate wilderness areas from existing primitive areas.

7. The Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs has apparently refused to hold hearings in the West close to the people who would be most affected by the passage of legislation which would be harmful to our local economies. The local people deserve a chance to express their views in person at a hearing.

8. S.174 would lump lands administered by three different federal agencies (Forest Service, National Park Service, Fish & Wildlife Service) in one huge wilderness system. This would cause unnecessary confusion and conflict among the agencies.

9. The wilderness areas established by S.174 would be too large and inaccessible to protect against fire, insects and disease. This threatens not only the timberlands, wildlife and recreational values in the wilderness but also in the surrounding areas.

10. Certain parts of primitive and wilderness areas should be reclassified for multiple use. Once the boundaries are established by law, reasonable and needed changes would be almost impossible to make.

11. Use of the forest and mountain country for camping, fishing, hunting and other forms of outdoor recreation is increasing rapidly. The size of some of the overly large primitive areas should be reduced so that more of the outstanding recreational values of these areas could be made available to the average citizen. This would be very difficult if S.174 is passed.

12. The present administration in Washington is much concerned about doing something to stimulate employment in "depressed areas." If S.174 is passed, large areas of commercial timber needed to strengthen local employment would be locked up. This would aggravate the "depressed area" problem.

13. Timber is the life-blood of many western communities. Thousands of local citizens are completely dependent on the forest products industry for their jobs. S.174, if passed, would cause severe economic losses in many areas.

14. S.174, if passed, would severely hamper needed mineral development because prospecting and mining would have to be specifically authorized for each specific area by the President, subject to his determination that such use is in the best interests of the United States.

15. Livestock grazing would be permitted in wilderness areas only where already "well established." This would interfere with another of the uses which should be part of an intelligent integrated multiple use program, especially since S.174 would immediately re-

classify as wilderness all existing national forest primitive areas.

16. All wilderness legislation by Congress should wait until after the report of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission. This Commission was appointed by President Eisenhower to study and make recommendations on the nation-wide needs for all types of outdoor recreation, including wilderness. This report should make possible a more intelligent consideration of the amount, kind and location of lands to be established as wilderness areas.

17. One of the most objectional features of S.174 is that it would take the initiative for reclassifying national forest primitive areas away from the Forest Service. Under present Forest Service procedure, local people are given an opportunity to express their views at local hearings for each proposed primitive area reclassification. S.174 would deny the people this right.

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Anyone who wishes to oppose S.174 should write immediately to:

Honorable Clinton P. Anderson, Chairman
Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs
Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C.

Be sure to ask that your statement be entered in the hearing record.

Statements must be received by Senator Anderson not later than March 15 to be recorded. However, additional statements sent to your congressmen would be of great value, even after closure of the hearing record.

Other members of the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs are:

Henry M. Jackson (Wash.)	Lee Metcalf (Mont.)
Alan Bible (Nev.)	J. J. Hickey (Wyo.)
John A. Carroll (Colo.)	Henry C. Dworshak (Idaho)
Frank Church (Idaho)	Thomas H. Kuchel (Calif.)
Ernest Gruening (Alaska)	Barry Goldwater (Ariz.)
Frank E. Moss (Utah)	Gordon Allott (Colo.)
Oren E. Long (Hawaii)	Hiram L. Fong (Hawaii)
Quentin N. Burdick (N.D.)	Jack R. Miller (Iowa)

Address of these senators is Senate Office Building, Washington, D. C.

Also, letters from Idaho citizens to Gracie Pfost, Idaho's Congresswoman, would carry weight. Her address is:

Honorable Gracie Pfost
Old House Office Building
Washington, D. C.

Respectfully,

The Inland Empire Multiple Use Committee
P. O. Box 600
Lewiston, Idaho

P.S. Immediate action is imperative if S.174 is to be stopped. Be sure to give two or three reasons, in your own words, for your opposition.