STATEMENT OF:

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BEFORE

PUBLIC LANDS SUBCOMMITTEE

HOUSE INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

McCALL, IDAHO

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S.174-WILDERNESS BILL

I am George W. Beardmore, Secretary of the North Idaho Forestry Association, Lewiston, Idaho. I appear before this Subcommittee in opposition to S.174-Wilderness Bill.

The North Idaho Forestry Association is one of the oldest conservation organizations in the Nation. It was organized as an unincorporated, non-profit association of forest land owners in Northern Idaho on October 10, 1908. It has remained active throughout these years and has been dedicated to its purposes, as expressed in article II of its constitution, in "the conservation of forest resources of Northern Idaho generally and particularly and the promotion of practical forestry".

I am a native of Idaho. I am proud I have been born, reared, educated and lived in this fine State for more than 53 years. I have been Secretary of this association since March, 1945. I have been President of the Potlatch Timber Protective Association since March, 1952. I was a member of the State Cooperative Board of Forestry from 1947 to 1955. I am an attorney by profession, employed by Potlatch Forests, Inc., since June, 1940.

This Association followed the development of this Wilderness

Bill, its amendments and have reviewed the statements and recommendations of the Inland Empire Multiple Use Committee presented to this Subcommittee by Royce G. Cox. The North Idaho Forestry Association endorses and approves those statements. On behalf of the North Idaho Forestry Association we desire to take only a few minutes to state our position on this Bill and re-emphasize our position.

We are not opposed to the wilderness concept. We are opposed to the Wilderness Bill, S.174, as amended. We appreciate the fact the amended Bill is a slightly more palatable Bill, and we are not attempting to be "intellectually dishonest" in our opposition and neither are we "mislead alarmists". We are not attempting to convince anyone that Idaho is contributing more acreage to the wilderness than any other state. We are saying that over three (3) million acres of Federal lands that have not been classified as wilderness will be blanketed into a system that puts the "burden of proof" on the State from which it came to retrieve the full use of those acres and before a "jury" that is not interested in a local problem. We do say, if there is a demonstrated necessity in the best interest of this Nation that more land is needed for wilderness or any other purpose the citizens of Idaho will have no objections and will gladly contribute more than its share.

Our great Nation was built by development of its natural resources. Congress has directed that public lands be managed under the multiple-use concept of land management. It is an unwise reversal of present public land policy to now blanket into a single use Wilderness System some fifty-four million acres on which many million of acres the natural resources never have been adequately inventoried. There is no compelling reason that these acres be virtually "locked up" with exploration and development prohibited.

Vast areas of wilderness are a luxurious economic waste which we can ill afford.

The demand for recreational areas is for the mass of our population that desires family access to the outdoors. There is plenty of wilderness for the few who have the desire and means to seek the solitude of the wilds. The fact remains that about ninety-five per cent of the use of our national parks is on five per cent of the lands along the roads. More people could enjoy the scientific, educational and scenic values of even these park areas if they had inexpensive access to them.

We know this Subcommittee is aware that well over fifty per cent of the land area of the eleven Western States and Alaska is in Federal ownership or management. In these twelve states more than ninety per cent of the lands affected by the Wilderness Bill is found. Their "life blood" is more development and use of the natural resources--not less. To intentionally deprive this vast area of our country of the privilege to fully utilize that which nature has endowed it with is a public disservice. It is no answer to say this Bill is no more restrictive than present regulations or that the only thing really new is Congress taking the veto power from the executive branch.

The single use need for wilderness in the foreseeable future does not out weigh the prudence and wisdom of having these lands available for multiple-use. We are aware these primitive areas are now restricted but we do not agree that the proposed Bill adequately assures us in Idaho that non-wilderness areas will be returned to the national forests to be administered as other national forest lands. The important difference is that review and classification

of these lands under present administration procedure can be had as the necessity arises and by the agency which by law of Congress must manage the lands within the multiple-use concept. We believe it is unnecessary and undesirable to now say to the Forest Service, "after inventing the wilderness area idea and having started such zoning in 1924 and having set aside over 14.6 million acres of wilderness type lands, you no longer are competent". The "alarmists" are those who fear there will be no wilderness under our present system.

We suggest, that if it is the will of Congress that it is necessary to molify the apprehensions of the wilderness people, amend S.174 so it includes only lands presently classified as wilderness. If better use in the future can be found for these areas then Congress should pass appropriate legislation at that time. If the so-called "primitive areas" or parts thereof should eventually be determined to be needed for only single use dedication then Congress can pass legislation to include that area in the Wilderness System. But don't pass legislation that in effect puts three (3) million acres of land in Idaho in a Wilderness System, subject to review, and say to 667,191 plus people in Idaho that before you can regain multiple-use of these lands you must come 3,000 miles to Washington, take aggressive action in Congress where you have two Senators and two over worked Congressmen to charge into the wilderness zealots and expect the impossible.

The basic fear in Idaho is that once the land grab has been made in S.174 the 667,191 citizens in Idaho will be left crying in a political wilderness in which they have no desire to be.

The importance of the total acreage affected and the total known resources within these areas has been minimized. We are "woodswise"

enough to read the signs when those who favor the wilderness system say, "the maximum possible inclusion would be 3,094,568 acres, which is only 5.7% of Idaho's total area," and "the need is for the application of modern forestry techniques to all the 488 million acres of commercial forest lands in the Nation, outside the forest wilderness areas, rather than to cut over the nine-tenths of one (1%) per cent of such lands in the area of wilderness value to permit a few more days of procrastination". The natives translate the "national smoke signals" into understandable language to mean, "come hell and high water your problem in Idaho is so infinitesimally small that we have no time for you and, mistake or not, you in Idaho can be sacrificed to wilderness without noticeable affect at the national level".

The Timber Resources Report No. 14, published by the Department of Agriculture in 1958 on page 130, estimated Idaho had 96 billion board feet of sawtimber. In the 1.8 million acre Selway-Bitterroot Primitive Area there is 7 billion board feet or 7.3% of the total and in the 1.2 million acre Idaho Primitive Area there is not less than another 5 billion board feet or 5.2%. In these two primitive areas alone there is approximately 12 billion board feet of the total 96 billion board feet of sawtimber in Idaho. That is 12.5% of the total sawtimber available for the future forest products economy in Idaho. We say to you, 12.5% of anything is not to be minimized in anyone's economy. We are fully aware these volumes are now restricted by administrative regulations as well as presently some areas cannot profitably be harvested. I can only say that when I was first following my father around in the woods of Idaho probably over 50% of the sawtimber was not economically operable. That same timber is now the backbone of our present day forest

products economy. To permanently lockup these tremendously large areas in Idaho would be a tragic economic wasteland for the privileged few who would trammel only a small segment.

Whether it is called procrastination or not, we caution you to proceed slowly before three (3) million acres in Idaho is dedicated to the luxury of a single wilderness. These areas should be thoroughly inventoried for forest product values, explored for unknown minerals and presently unrecognized potentials for grazing, fish and wild life, mass recreation and wilderness. Because of Idaho's topographical characteristics it will always contribute more than its fair share of wilderness even with full development of its natural resources. We repeat, these things should be done first by the administrative agencies at the local level and not under a review system at the national level.

By not going into the technical aspects of the problems of managing these areas in connection with fire, insect and disease, as well as fish and game, we do not mean to leave the impression that these are not important in your deliberations. We are confident you are aware of them and we do not desire to bore you with repetition. Also, we realize you know that 25% of the gross receipts from the national forests is returned to the counties ostensibly "in lieu of taxes" and to restrict the earning capacity of these national forest lands deprives these taxing units of its just revenue. Of course, one method to compensate for this loss would be for S.174 to be further amended to permit the Idaho State Tax Commission to assess and tax these restricted lands on the same basis and by the same formula that similar lands in private ownership are assessed and taxed.

In conclusion, our position is, there is no need for wilderness legislation to preserve such areas; that S.174 as amended, is undesirable in that it is a "toe in the door" approach to a wilderness administration agency; and all lands not presently inventoried and classified as wilderness should be excluded from the Bill. The wilderness advocates need have no fear that during the hiatus period the primitive areas will be "gobbled up" and restricted to multiple-use.

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