

Testimony of Royce G. Cox  
before the  
Public Lands Subcommittee,  
House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee  
In Opposition to S. 174  
A Bill to Establish a National Wilderness Preservation System  
Washington, D. C.  
May 11, 1962

Madam Chairman, Members of the Committee:

My name is Royce G. Cox. My home is in Lewiston, Idaho. I am Chairman of the Inland Empire Multiple Use Committee, a group composed of members of six forest conservation and development organizations representing a large number of natural resource owners, operators, and users in Idaho, Western Montana, and Eastern Washington. The membership, objectives and reports of our committee are summarized in the attached sheet, "Facts About the Inland Empire Multiple Use Committee."

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before this Congressional Committee and present the viewpoints of a large number of western citizens who are greatly concerned about the Wilderness Bill.

We wish to reaffirm the support of our I.E.M.U. Committee for establishing and maintaining a reasonable acreage of wilderness on Federal lands, providing the needs of our local citizens for the other multiple uses of these lands are not jeopardized. As evidence of this support, please note that at Forest Service hearings on the reclassification of two primitive areas in the West our committee recommended a total of 1,021,000 acres of wilderness, including 281,000 acres of commercial forest land. Nevertheless, we are strongly opposed to S. 174 because we are convinced it is unnecessary and not in the best interests of the public land states of the West. Some of the amendments made to the bill prior to its passage by the Senate are highly favorable; however, the bill's basic defects have not yet been eliminated. Therefore, if your Subcommittee decides S. 174 is to be given further consideration we hope you will add several needed amendments.

For the record here, I wish to repeat what you heard during your hearings in McCall last fall. You are to be commended for holding those hearings in the West close to the people most affected by this legislation. Additional information and viewpoints have been developed since those hearings that will be worthy of consideration by this Committee.

Since the McCall hearings our committee has continued its study of the Wilderness controversy. We find "grass roots" opposition to S. 174 growing ever stronger, as people begin to understand it more fully.

Many average citizens are still confused by the morass of terms, definitions, and complexities of the wilderness bill and the wilderness debate in general. This is particularly true of those folks who are not close to the subject or who have not had an opportunity to study it in detail. Because of superb salesmanship by the chief sponsors of S. 174, many people have not fully realized just what this bill would do if passed in its present form. In many cases people change their opinion from support to opposition when they understand the definition of wilderness under S. 174 and the severe restrictions it would impose on such a vast area of public lands. More and more of these rank and file citizens are coming to realize that we cannot afford to risk the future economic and recreational development of local areas. This is true not only in Idaho but in many other western states so dependent on the resources from Federal lands.

To say, as many proponents have, that the bill would include no lands not already included in restricted-use areas does not allay the fears of these Western citizens because they have learned from experience that the wilderness issue is so charged with emotions that working out reasonable compromises is extremely difficult. These people realize that if S. 174 is passed in its present form the possibilities for working out reasonable and justifiable boundary changes later would be even more difficult if not impossible. And these people also know that while the resources from the vast area of public lands which would -- for all practical purposes -- be locked up under S. 174, may not have been critically needed in the past, many of these resources will be needed in the not too distant future to provide jobs and recreation opportunities for the rapidly increasing number of families in western states. These people want assurance that the key to the lock on these resources will not become lost in overly-restrictive Federal laws.

President Kennedy and Secretary of Agriculture Freeman have been quoted as saying we will need to double production of our natural resources by the year 2,000, if we are to meet the demands of the future. You can't do this if you lock up too much land.

While opposition to S. 174 is growing, our committee has found few people who are flatly opposed to all wilderness preservation. The basic issue then, is not one of wilderness preservation versus complete elimination, but rather one of how much wilderness is justified and whether another Federal law is necessary to preserve it.

The following summary, supported by the attached documents, brings the position of our committee up to date.

#### Summary of the Recommendations of the I.E.M.U. Committee

At the McCall, Idaho, hearings on S. 174 conducted by Congresswoman Pfof last October, the I.E.M.U. Committee presented three proposals for amendments to S. 174. Since then, after further careful study and talking to resource users, recreationists, and local citizens, we have expanded our proposals to a total of seven. The additional four proposals are intended to provide for future re-evaluation of wilderness and non-wilderness resources, to assure protection of multiple recreation use of the national parks, to provide for maintenance of existing private properties in primitive areas, and to assure sound management of national wildlife refuges and game ranges. The exact wording of the amendemnts, if accepted, would be left to Congress.

We are still strongly opposed to S. 174 because it is unnecessary and not in the best interests of western states. However, if in its final judgment, this Committee feels a bill is necessary to give adequate recognition to wilderness preservation, we urge that S. 174 first be amended along the following lines:

1. To give Congress positive control of lands to be included in the national wilderness preservation system through affirmative procedures, rather than negative as under the present bill.
2. To specifically exclude national forest primitive areas from the wilderness system until a thorough inventory and a complete economic analysis of all values and resources has been completed, with final inclusion -- by affirmative Congressional action -- of those areas determined to have their highest value as wilderness.
3. To make possible, under more realistic regulations, a thorough inventory and evaluation of the mineral potential in wilderness and primitive areas.

4. To more specifically provide for future justifiable boundary changes of wilderness areas based on periodic review and reappraisal of relative values for wilderness and non-wilderness uses. Specific guide-lines should be written into the bill to assure adequate evaluation.
5. To require the Secretary of the Interior to submit for positive action of Congress a total long-range plan for development and use of the national park system before recommending any area for wilderness classification.
6. To eliminate Section 4 entirely, or specifically provide for the choice of "free will" sale of private lands or trade for federal lands of equal value outside wilderness areas.
7. To specifically require the Secretary of the Interior to complete a thorough inventory and economic analysis of all resource values contained in national wildlife refuges and game ranges, and to prepare a long range management plan for these areas before recommending any part of them for inclusion in the wilderness system.

Our committee feels that these seven proposals, if adopted, would provide much more clear and positive safeguards to assure a sound program of integrated multiple use management of the public's natural resources involved. If S. 174 is amended in accordance with these proposals, we feel we could then conscientiously support the bill, providing it is not changed in some other way to make it incompatible with our views.

The basis for the above seven recommendations is given in the attached reports of our I.E.M.U. Committee entitled "Summary of the Wilderness Issue, April 17, 1962," and "Recommendations on the Wilderness Bill as Amended and Passed by the Senate, October, 1961." The April 17 report also contains a commentary on the cost of maintaining the wilderness preservation system, a factor in which Chairman Aspinall has expressed much interest. Mr. Aspinall, and other members of the Committee who have this concern, are to be commended because this is a highly important aspect of the wilderness issue. Certainly it is something which cannot be glossed over by the glib and baseless assertion so often repeated by some proponents of S. 174 that, "The wilderness can be preserved without taking one dollar from anyone's pocket."

Also attached to this statement are two other reports, prepared by our I.E.M.U. Committee, on wilderness problems.

These are: Report No. 1, dated February, 1962, and titled "Proposal for the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area", and Report No. 3 of January, 1962, "Proposed Anaconda-Pintlar Wilderness Area." I would appreciate these being filed with the record of this hearing. We present these reports, not as an answer to all aspects of wilderness classification, but rather as examples of two approaches to the task of rational consideration of the complex problems involved in reclassifying two specific primitive areas for wilderness. Perhaps these will be of some value to this Committee.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, may I stress that our committee fully recognizes the values of wilderness for specialized recreation and spiritual stimulation. However, we also believe the amount and the kind of country set aside for wilderness must be kept in balance with the other needs of local and regional citizens for the material necessities of life.

Of paramount importance is the absolute necessity of protecting and developing the natural resources which sustain the basic industries of the west--agriculture, minerals, forest products. These industries form the foundation upon which rests all other social and economic development.

Our committee feels that a well-balanced, long-range, over-all program of integrated natural resource management must be developed, not only for the West but for the Nation. Although there are many complex problems, much progress has been made during the last half-century; even greater progress will be made in the next, if the individuals, organizations and agencies involved will dedicate their sincere efforts and cooperation to the cause.

I deeply appreciate your courtesy and patience in listening to me. You face a serious responsibility in making your recommendations on this vitally important legislation. I know you will employ your highest intelligence, logic and common sense in arriving at your decisions.

Thank you.