

Statement on S. 4028
Presented for the North Idaho Forestry Association
by Royce G. Cox, Before the Senate Committee on
Interior and Insular Affairs, on November 12, 1958
Salt Lake City, Utah, Hearing

Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen of the Committee:

My name is Royce G. Cox. I live in Lewiston, Idaho, where I am employed as Chief Forester by Potlatch Forests, Inc.

This statement is presented on behalf of the North Idaho Forestry Association, a conservation group composed of private timberland owners and operators in Idaho north of the Salmon River. Our membership represents at least 75 percent of the forest products production in north Idaho. This Association has actively supported and worked for sound natural resource development and use since its organization on October 10, 1908, a record which gives it the distinction of being one of the oldest and most progressive conservation groups in the nation.

The members of the North Idaho Forestry Association are generally in accord with the preservation of a system of wilderness areas reasonably consistent with the actual need for such areas. We believe that a portion of the Nation's true wilderness-type country can be maintained in an essentially primitive condition without unduly jeopardizing the general economy and industry, providing adequate assurances are made for developing and utilizing the minerals, water, timber, and other natural resources of these areas when required by exceptional value, extreme local need, or national emergency.

However, we are opposed to the enactment of Senate Bill 4028 because we believe such legislation would have a damaging effect, not only on the immediate and long-range management of lands which are now classified or might in the future be classified as wilderness, but also on the adjacent lands and communities. Our reasons for this belief are as follows:

1. The policies and plans of the professional government land managers presently charged with the responsibility of designating and maintaining a system of wilderness areas are based on a high degree of technical knowledge, experience, and skill, and therefore would serve the best interests of the people of the United States much more efficiently than would a wilderness preservation council with citizen members whose qualifications need be solely "informed regarding, and interested in the preservation of, wilderness;---" (Quote from S.4028).

2. Through failure resulting from insufficient time or vision, the agencies charged with the responsibility of designating areas of wilderness under the proposed bill could by default cause excessive areas of national forest and national parks to be automatically and unwisely classed as wilderness.

3. The withdrawal of vast areas of potential commercial forest land under the proposed bill would result not only in a stagnation of the job opportunities so essential to the increasing population of people dependent on the forest industries of the northwestern states, but in a weakening of our national strength as well.

4. The Timber Resources Review of the U. S. Forest Service states the following: "The potential demand for timber products is strikingly upward," and "The nation has no excess of forest land." As a result of these findings, all timber management agencies, both public and private, are intensifying their efforts to attain greater productivity and closer utilization of the trees from our remaining acres of forest land. Any action to interfere with or reduce this program--such as would result under the emotional approach of the proposed wilderness bill--would not be in the best interests of the nation.

5. Provisions for needed changes in the boundaries of wilderness areas under S.4028 are subject to Congressional approval. (Reference to Sec. 2 (f) of S.4028.) This places an unwarranted additional burden on Congress and is not justified because of the following reasoning:

One of the objections the proponents of S.4028 have to the present wilderness policy is that the wilderness areas do not have the legal protection of the law. However, our understanding is that under present plans of the Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service, the wilderness areas as designated within national forests will have legal status and protection through the official written approval and direction of the Secretary of Agriculture. Changes in wilderness area boundaries could not be made without adequate public hearings and written approval of the Secretary of Agriculture. Violations against wilderness would be subject to prosecution. Thus, adequate and reasonable safeguards for wilderness will be assured without the enactment of S.4028.

6. Under the proposed S.4028, the provisions for prevention and control of excessive losses from insects and disease epidemics within wilderness areas are subject to authorization by the President of the United States. (Reference to Sec. 3 (c) (2) of S.4028) This would place an added and unnecessary burden on the President and could cause a critical loss of time before action could be taken; this in turn could result in flagrant waste of our timber resource, not only within wilderness areas but in adjacent stands of valuable commercial timber to which the epidemics could easily spread. The responsibility for insect and disease control should rest with the technical and professional administrators of the several federal agencies presently responsible for the wilderness areas.

7. The creation of a National Wilderness Preservation Council having citizen members who need only be "informed regarding, and interested in, wilderness;--" (Sec. 4 (a) S.4028) would result in a group strongly biased in favor of expanding the wilderness system. Such a group would tend to hamper and obstruct the Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the Indian Service in carrying out their responsibility of developing our natural resources for the best benefit of our total society. Also, the creation of such a council would result in wasteful duplication of effort and expense.

8. S.4028 places emphasis on locking up vast areas of scenic country which because of its remoteness and difficulty of access would be made unavailable to all but a small percentage of our nation's citizens. This is contrary to our democratic philosophy.

9. Proponents of S.4028 stress the point that the bill would not lock up natural resources because a key is provided to open the lock if and when such resources become urgently needed. We believe, however, that the provisions for boundary changes provided in the bill are too complex and would cause the key to become lost or at the best far too difficult to find. We further believe that provisions for needed boundary changes would be much more realistic under direct Forest Service and Department of Agriculture plans and supervision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The North Idaho Forestry Association respectfully requests that the following specific suggestions be considered by this Committee in its further study of the wilderness problem:

1. A thorough study of our nation's real recreational needs--both present and future and including the need for wilderness--should be completed before any additional action is taken in definitely establishing wilderness area boundaries. We

assume that such a study will be forthcoming under the program of the National Outdoor Recreation Resource Review Commission, recently appointed by President Eisenhower.

2. A comprehensive inventory of the multiple-use potential of existing and proposed wilderness areas should be carried out to determine present and future values. This information should be used in weighing the multiple-use values against the value of wilderness alone.

In this study, the value of the commercial timber should be given careful consideration. For example, consider the situation in regard to the Selway-Bitterroot Primitive Area in northern Idaho and western Montana. Figures on acreage and timber volumes as supplied by the Forest Service are as follows: (No figures on northern Idaho alone are available.)

<u>Class of Land</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>%</u>
Commercial forest area	932,000	49.7
Non-commercial forest area	943,000	50.3
Total	<u>1,875,000</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Merchantable sawtimber volume - 7,000,000,000 bd. ft.

The 932,000 acres of commercial forest area, or about one-half of the total area, is land having the capacity for growing successive crops of merchantable timber. The 943,000 acres listed as non-commercial forest area is composed primarily of high, rough mountainous country where the soil is too poor or the climate too severe to grow commercial timber; hence, it is essentially non-productive except for its watershed, scenic, and game habitat values and the possibility of valuable mineral deposits.

The seven billion board feet of merchantable sawtimber growing on the commercial forest area is composed of trees of such size and quality as to be utilizable today except for the lack of access roads and a ready market. In addition to the sawtimber, there is an unestimated but large volume of pulpwood.

The official Forest Service figures just cited show that a tremendous volume of potentially usable timber is already encompassed by just one area now designated as wilderness. The Forest Service does not give an estimate of the dollar value of this merchantable timber, and actually, it cannot be considered operable at the present time because of the lack of access roads and the distance from market. Neither is this timber urgently needed to supply present requirements of the forest products industry. But what about the future?

Assuming the predictions of the Timber Resource Review are reasonably accurate, the day will come in the not too distant future when this timber will be urgently needed to help supply the continued operation and expansion of the forest products industry to meet increasing job demands of a growing population. The following projections of the development of the merchantable timber resource now locked up in the Selway-Bitterroot Primitive Area will serve to illustrate its potential importance to the economy of our region:

Projection a.

Under reasonably good management the 932,000 acres of commercial forest land could eventually produce at least 186 million board feet of sawtimber annually plus an additional 37 million of pulp wood or a total wood production of 223 million board feet each year forever.

But this would be a long time in the future because many years would be required to convert this poorly-managed forest into a

reasonably well-managed forest. To be more realistic, let us consider what contribution the present timber supply of this primitive area could provide in the more immediate future.

Projection b.

The present volume of 7,000,000,000 board feet of timber on the commercial forest area could reasonably provide an annual sustained production of 100 million board feet of sawlogs plus 20 million board feet of pulpwood, or a total of 120 million board feet each year. If this timber were efficiently utilized by an integrated wood processing industry--wherein a variety of products were manufactured (lumber, fuel, plywood, pulp and paper)--the annual payroll of wages and salaries would be at least \$8,000,000. This would provide year-round employment for approximately 1,500 persons, based on today's average wage and salary earnings in such an integrated industry in our area.

What sized community would this support? If we apply factors developed by the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, we can obtain a better concept of just how important this timber will be to our future citizens. (These figures represent an average for the entire nation and would be conservative for our area.)

What the commercial forest land now in the Selway-Bitterroot Primitive Area would support:

10,500 population	49,500 acres of farm products
2,900 homes	135 teachers
10 churches	165 school rooms
2,400 automobiles	\$18,750,000 taxable property
240 stores and shops	\$11,250,000 life insurance
\$5,625,000 in retail stores	\$ 7,500,000 bank deposits
180 professional men	

The above illustration is a hypothetical estimate, of course, but non-the-less it is realistic and serves to stress the urgent need to carry out a comprehensive inventory of the potential economic value of the multiple resources now locked up in our wilderness and primitive areas.

3. Our Association further recommends that the larger wilderness areas be reduced to a more realistic size by eliminating part of the more valuable and more accessible stands of over-mature, merchantable timber. The vast, roadless expanse of some of the existing and proposed wilderness areas unnecessarily increases the cost of protection against fire, insects and disease. Again consider the Selway-Bitterroot Area:

The occurrence of a large number of lightning-caused forest fires each year in this primitive area is a serious threat to the commercial timber, scenic and watershed values and other multiple-use aspects. While the Forest Service is to be commended on a good job of fire suppression, its task is made extremely difficult and costly because of the general inaccessibility of the area. Without adequate fire protection, this primitive area could easily become a vast expanse of blackened snags and denuded earth, hardly an inspirational landscape for even the most devout wilderness enthusiast.

No reliable estimates are available on the timber loss generated by insects and disease in this primitive area, but such losses without question greatly exceed that caused by fire. For example, the spruce bark beetle caused a heavy loss of high-quality spruce timber a few years ago. The dead timber could not be salvaged and consequently has created a fire hazard of explosive potential.

4. Careful consideration should be given to the game management problem in the wilderness areas. Game management people are becoming greatly concerned about the overpopulation of big game in the remote sections of the Selway-Bitterroot Primitive Area. Because of the difficulty and excessive cost of hunter penetration into these remote areas, the herds of deer and elk have built up to a population which exceeds the carrying capacity of the winter range. Unless something is done to make these areas more accessible, the browse species upon which big game feed will be severely depleted and extensive animal starvation will inevitably result.

5. Any study of the recreational value of wilderness should emphasize the relative use of such areas as compared to the more accessible areas in the national and state parks, national forests and privately-owned Tree Farms. Forest Service figures show only a little over 7,000 persons actually entered the Idaho portion of the Selway-Bitterroot Primitive Area in a recent year. While this is an insignificant number as compared to the use made of more accessible areas, it is still misleading because without question the great majority of this 7,000 were hunters and fishermen who penetrated only a narrow fringe adjacent to the four airstrips and the few roads bordering and entering the area. These people made use of the area because of the roads and air strips and would have done so even if it were not a wilderness. No one knows how many people penetrate the vast roadless interior of this huge primitive area, but it must be few indeed. True, the number of wilderness users will no doubt increase, but it is difficult to visualize a very impressive number of people who have the time, experience and physical stamina to spend the many days necessary to traverse on foot the 75 miles of rugged trail crossing this primitive area--or who can afford to hire a guide and pack train for a less arduous trip. The use of such large areas of wilderness will be limited to a privileged few.

SUMMARY

In summary, I wish to stress that the North Idaho Forestry Association is not opposed to the maintenance of a reasonable area of wilderness consistent with the recreational and economic needs of the nation. However, we are opposed to S.4028 because we feel it is unnecessary and not in the best interests of our local, regional and national economies for reasons which have been detailed previously in this statement. We urge a careful study of all the inter-related problems to determine whether the preservation of all the large acreage presently designated as primitive and wilderness is necessary. Therefore, we strongly feel the present administration of primitive and wilderness areas should be continued pending the study by the National Outdoor Recreation Review Commission. We further urge that a comprehensive inventory be made, as soon as possible, of present and potential multiple-use values of existing and proposed primitive and wilderness areas so that the information will be available when needed as a criterion for weighing these multiple-use values against the single-use value as wilderness.

Respectfully submitted,

NORTH IDAHO FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

Royce G. Cox