

To Wild. Research Center Grad Students

Keith  
Dan  
Taylor  
Greg  
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# East River Travellers

exploring the uncommon

Jeff Yeo - Taylor Arch

Ed Krump

John Hendee

cc Jeff Olson

13 June 1994

Dr John Hendee, Director  
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University of Idaho  
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Dear John

Thanks for your letter of 8 June which answered the remaining questions; I look forward to meeting Ed Krump in McCall on 18 June.

Here is another "white paper" to ponder among the wilderness issues.

Best wishes

Peter Preston

cc: Kurt Becker  
Payette Natl Forest  
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cc: Ken Wotrung  
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SOME SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS  
RESULTING FROM WILDERNESS DESIGNATION

The following observations and comments are made by Peter Preston, a former forester on the Payette National Forest and current wilderness enthusiast:

During the summer of 1993 I had the opportunity to revisit the western fringes of the Frank Church-River of No Return (FC-RONR) Wilderness, including Warren, Yellow Pine, and the site of our first home on the South Fork of the Salmon River. It was a nostalgic visit, not having been here in over thirty years, as this land has always given me a strong "sense of place". It gave me a good feeling to find that in my long absence the old Idaho Primitive Area had been renamed to honor Frank Church, more land had been added to the wilderness, and that a new management plan was underway with strong public involvement.

During that August visit, and subsequently, I also developed a concern about the socio-economic impact of wilderness designation. Not that I should be misunderstood, I remain fully in favor of wilderness preservation, but there is an aspect of wilderness designation that deserves our careful consideration: the attitude of the peripheral residents.

The people who live on the periphery of the Frank (and probably other wilderness/national park areas as well) are few in number but their voices can be heard far and wide by great numbers. Witness the February 1994 National Geographic article (attached) quoting Salmon National Forest Supervisor John Burns and a number of his constituents who bad mouthed the wilderness system.

On the Payette National Forest side I was embarrassed to find upon arrival in Warren (see photos) the large banner proclaiming that Warren was "Home of the Annual Spotted Owl Shoot". While this is part in jest it still is reflective of the people's attitude of thumbing their noses at wild land conservationists and Government policies on restrictive land use. This is not to say that the peripheral residents would rape the wilderness if given the opportunity; on the contrary, in my recollection of living and working with them, they have a great respect for the land and get upset if anyone "messes with it".

While not directed at the Wilderness System within the U.S., the attached article "Sharing the Wealth" from the Jan/Feb 1994 National Parks Magazine describes a similar situation in which the peripheral residents are "locked out" of their areas of economic sustenance. I am not suggesting that the Frank, or any other wilderness or park, should be "unlocked" for logging or mining, but that there is a perception of an economic problem on the part of the peripheral residents. That perception of an economic problem, on their part, is a very real social problem because it tends to put the U.S. Forest Service and the Wilderness System in a bad light.

Notwithstanding the current Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) management plan development process for the Frank, in which the public is heavily involved, there is an obvious need for a redoubled effort to enroll peripheral residents in the notion of their longer term economic benefits of having wilderness in their back yard.

A number of other countries of the world have recognized this problem and, where possible, have employed these people as guards, guides, biodata collectors, maintenance personnel etc. As the volume of visitors to the Frank, and other wilderness areas, increases dramatically in the near term, we should look to the peripheral residents to fill similar roles for more packers and guides, trail maintenance, protection staff, biodata collectors, and whatever else needs to be done. And today we should make this near term potential known to them so they might have something to look forward to as the timber industry diminishes in their areas.

The bottom line of all of this is: the wilderness area peripheral residents are a capable resource who should be enrolled in wilderness management positions wherever possible, rather than have them believe that the wilderness is taking away their livelihood.

EXTRACTS FROM "FEDERAL LANDS: NEW SHOWDOWNS IN THE OLD WEST"  
BY RICHARD CONNIFF IN NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, FEBRUARY 1994

I (the author) asked if wilderness designation wasn't bringing new money into the community (Salmon, ID) from recreationalists - generally regarded by environmentalists as the best hope for both the federal lands and towns like Salmon. "We don't want their money, and we don't want their attitude," (said a member of Grassroots for Multiple Use). It was a notion that I heard everywhere in the rural West: Recreational visitors were a threat rather than a new and more sustainable leg for the economy. (pg 21)

The next day I tried this idea on Hadley Roberts, a retired wildlife biologist and the most visible environmentalist in Salmon. ...Roberts replied mildly that industry here was destroying itself by clinging to old abusive practices. The problem wasn't that the land was being locked up for wilderness, he said; it was being played out. (pg 22)

"The national parks can't take the pressure. They're overbooked," (said a dude ranch outfitter). But the two-million acre Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, just next door, was Yellowstone without Winnebagos, and the outside world was quickly discovering it. Little Salmon, Idaho, is going to be a Jackson Hole in ten years," (said the outfitter). "It's going to be a Sun Valley." (pg 22)

I asked John Burns, the supervisor of the Salmon Forest, if he thought the land was being played out or locked up. "Both at the same time," he said. ...About a quarter of the 1.8 million acre Salmon Forest became part of the Frank Church Wilderness in 1980. Another 800,000 acres are referred to as roadless, but 200,000 of these are officially open for commercial use. The reality is that environmental appeals often block any efforts to log there. ..."I don't think people understand the big picture," Burns said. "If you keep setting land aside and imposing restrictions, the price is going to go up." (pg 25)

WARREN, IDAHO, AUGUST 1993  
PHOTOS BY PETER PRESTON



BANNER PROCLAIMING WARREN AS "HOME OF THE ANNUAL SPOTTED OWL SHOOT"



WARREN WITH "SPOTTED OWL" BANNER  
OVERHUNG SIGNPOST FOR LEFT