

C O P Y

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COLLEGE OF FORESTRY
UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

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The Honorable Gracie Pfost, Chairman
Public Lands Subcommittee
House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs
House Office Building
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mrs. Pfost:

We are writing to express Western Forestry and Conservation Association's strong support for legislation along the lines of H.R. 6377 to require an Act of Congress for public land withdrawals in excess of 5000 acres in aggregate for any project or facility of any department or agency of the Government.

Our Association, which has for 52 years promoted the conservation through wise use and protection of all Western forests, is concerned over the large aggregate acreage of forest land in the West already reserved for special uses. Since 95.6 per cent of the federally-owned land in the United States is located in 18 Western states and such land constitutes the majority acreage of five of those states and a large percentage of the acreage of several others, (1) a real danger exists to Western economies of over-assignment of federal lands to limited use. The many millions of acres in the West already so withdrawn should certainly be able to accommodate most of the special uses that can be justified.

It must never be forgotten that federal lands have a dual responsibility, or their benefits must accrue to two recipients:

1. To their stockholders, the people of the United States.
2. To the support of tributary communities dependent on the resources therefrom.

This fact was recognized by President Theodore Roosevelt in his message of December 2, 1901 when he asserted:

"The fundamental idea of forestry is the perpetuation of the forests by use. Forest protection is not an end in itself; it is a means to increase and sustain the resources of our country and the industries which depend upon them...."

"The practical usefulness of the national forest reserves to the mining, grazing, irrigation and other interests of the regions in which the reserves lie has led to a widespread demand for their protection and extension...."

(1) 1960 Statistical Appendix to the Annual Report of The Director, Bureau of Land Management, page 12.

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It clearly was the intent then that the forest reserves should undergird the local economies dependent thereon and that this was an important reason for their establishment. Similar intent surely accompanies other federal lands.

Many of our sharpest federal land use conflicts these days are in areas of high federal ownership where we are told that the will of the stockholders is for a limited use which may not do most toward meeting local needs. And who is to say that local needs should not be given important consideration? The present deliberations on reclassification of the nearly two-million-acre Selway-Bitterroot Primitive Area in Idaho are a case in point. So the continuous, large-scale withdrawal of federal lands for special purposes poses some very crucial problems for the West and the nation as a whole.

It is quite understandable that the federal land agencies are desirous of retaining their present prerogatives of withdrawing large tracts of public lands for special projects, purposes and groups. However, with special interest pressures mounting and land being limited, close Congressional scrutiny of each sizeable acreage proposed for withdrawal may well be in the last analysis the only long-term safeguard against economic strangulation of hundreds of small Western communities.

We urge speedy enactment of legislation along the lines of H.R. 6377 and respectfully request inclusion of these remarks in the record of the hearings thereon.

Sincerely,

H. R. Glascock, Jr.
Forest Counsel

HRG:cw
cc:Mr. Corydon Wagner
cc:Mr. S. G. Merryman