

September 27, 2006

**Testimony of Carole King, 29-year resident of Idaho (25 in Custer County)
Regarding HR 3603
Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act (CIEDRA)**

As a 25-year resident of Custer County, I want to thank Chairman Craig and Senator Crapo for their longtime support of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. Ironically, the harm that HR 3603 would do to the Sawtooth NRA is just one of many reasons why the Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act is a Bill of Broken Promises.

Since the Sawtooth NRA was established in 1972, Americans have invested \$65 million “to preserve the natural, scenic, historic, pastoral, wildlife and recreational values of the region.”¹

CIEDRA breaks a promise made to the American people by Congress 34 years ago by asking Americans to give away – outright, *for free!* – part of that \$65 million investment to support private development.

Section 103 hopes to mitigate damage to scenic values on the privatized land by including a list of deed restrictions for new homeowners that reads more like a list of CC&Rs for a homeowners’ association than a section of public land legislation.²

The fact is, those with inholdings within the Sawtooth NRA are already required to comply with existing restrictions.

Exhibit 1 is a photo of a mansion-sized home built in the Sawtooth NRA over the past two years.³ The photo shows that this home is clearly in violation of size and landscaping restrictions, yet no one did a thing to stop it from being built. The Forest Service doesn’t have enough staff or funding for enforcement. If we can’t enforce such violations now, who will take CIEDRA’s new deed restrictions seriously? Who will enforce them?

The Interior budget has been cut by over a billion dollars in the past two years. Today, some of my neighbors who work for the Forest Service are worried that there won’t be funding for their jobs next year. Where do proponents think the money for enforcement of CIEDRA’s deed restrictions is going to come from?

¹ Public Law 92-400

² Covenants, conditions and restrictions controlling the use, requirements and restrictions of a property, usually enforced by a homeowners’ association.

³ Photos may be viewed online at www.caroleking.com

Exhibit 2 is a photo of part of a large herd of elk in their winter habitat in Stanley. The Valley Creek conveyances and subsequent development of homes on that land would interfere with the existing use and breeding habits of many more elk than can be seen in the photo. Wildlife biologists who have studied this herd believe that reduction of winter range and breeding habitat will result in reduction of the elk population, which would likely be followed by a reduction of the millions of dollars hunters spend in Custer County every year.

Proponents denigrate the quality of some of the land conveyances by calling them desert land, or an old sewage dump, or wetlands that no one could possibly want to build on, implying that the land has little public value. If that's true, why change the status of any of that land?

The giveaway of public land is purportedly to increase Custer County's tax base, but that's just another promise waiting to be broken.

Exhibit 3 Studies by the Sonoran Institute, the University of Wyoming and the American Farmland Trust show that the cost of providing services to new homes in rural communities is greater than the revenue from new taxes.⁴ This is especially true in the West.

"...83 [eighty-three] studies of the cost of community services...found that residential use cost the counties an average of \$1.15 in community services for every \$1.00 in revenue created by that use."⁵ The \$1.15 cost for every dollar of revenue is just an average. The range is from \$1.05 to \$1.43.

Someone's going to get rich selling those homes, and it's not going to be Custer County. The residents of Custer County are going to get stuck providing the essential community services.

Since 2000, counties throughout the West have been appropriated less than half of their authorized Payments in Lieu of Taxes or PILT. There's another broken promise.

If we can't fully fund PILT, how can we fund CIEDRA?

A Congressional Budget Office report shows that HR 3603 authorizes more than \$31 million over the next two years.⁶ With the agency budget cuts, where's the money going to come from to keep this new promise of millions of dollars to my county? From the sale of public land? Not in America. Americans – including Idahoans – have come out overwhelmingly against privatizing public land.

⁴ See list of URLs following testimony.

⁵ From a December 2002 University of Wyoming study entitled The Cost of Community Services for Rural Residential Development in Wyoming

⁶ <http://www.cbo.gov/showdoc.cfm?index=7473&sequence=0>

Recently, the entire Idaho Congressional delegation appropriately said that public land should remain in public hands – including Mike Simpson!

Why is backdoor privatization okay in *his* bill? Congressman Simpson says it's apples and oranges.

I don't see a difference. It's all apples, and they're all rotten.

We keep hearing that CIEDRA was a carefully balanced collaborative effort that took 6 years. A true collaboration invites dissenters to the table and brings differing interests together. To the best of my knowledge, those conditions were not met. For example:

Had the Forest Service been consulted, they would likely have communicated their objections to the provisions in Title II allowing uses in CIEDRA's wilderness that are inconsistent with the 1964 Wilderness Act.

Exhibit 4 is the relevant portion of the Forest Service's testimony before the House subcommittee hearing on October 27, 2005.⁷

The supposedly collaborative table lacked two important legs from the beginning: no scientist; no economist.

Last week, the City of Stanley withdrew its support from the entire bill, except for the land conveyances.

A key player, Congressman Butch Otter, wasn't at the table. Mr. Otter opposes CIEDRA. He says that he would have voted against it, but we'll never know, because he didn't get the chance to cast a vote. HR 3603 was rushed through the House under suspension of the rules with zero business days' notice. its passage linked to the popular Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Act (HR 1501 and S.738).

Though a House member rose to speak on the floor against the inappropriate placement of this highly controversial bill on the suspension calendar, HR 3603 was allowed to pass through the House on a voice vote with audible nays.

This is not the "unanimous consent" reported on Congressman Simpson's website in a press release dated July 24, 2006.⁸

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<http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/archives/109/testimony/2005/joelholtrop102705.htm>

⁸ http://www.house.gov/list/press/id02_simpson/ciedra_passes.html

Exhibit 5 Three years ago, Idaho Conservation League's executive director Rick Johnson wrote a 10-page letter to Representative Simpson⁹ dated July 22, 2003 expressing the Board of Directors' strong opposition, from a conservation perspective, to provisions that today are part of Mr. Simpson's bill.

ICL's 180° turnaround and the tenacity of Mr. Johnson and other proponents in support of various incarnations of CIEDRA since 2003 are remarkable when you consider how little resemblance the bill under discussion today bears to ICL's 2003 recommendations.

What changed? What outside influence caused ICL's determination to uphold long-held sound science and economic-based conservation policy to melt away like spring snow?

One important thing did change in June, 2006. In order to get the bill on the House markup schedule, Mr. Simpson removed the voluntary grazing buyouts. Given ICL's position in 2003, removal of the grazing buyouts was a change in the wrong direction.

Their letter says: "We support the purchase of grazing allotments in the East Fork of the Salmon River area and development of conservation easements. We do not support land trades or transfers to accomplish this goal, and we are confident they are not necessary."¹⁰

Today ICL continues to promote passage of HR 3603 even though, prior to markup, grazing buyouts were a cornerstone of the group's support. The buyouts were also important to other groups and individuals, including the many Idaho cattlemen and women for whom removal of the buyouts were just one more broken promise.

Congressman Simpson said at the House Subcommittee hearing on October 27, 2005: "We are kind of on a razor's edge right here. Any significant changes, and the plan falls off into that abyss called former wilderness proposals."

No one can dispute that removal of the grazing buyouts is a significant change. When can we look for Mr. Simpson to withdraw his bill?

Nothing grows well in a field of broken promises.

CIEDRA fails to reserve federal water rights, opening the way for the State of Idaho to allocate federal water to private users. If CIEDRA passes, the salmon and steelhead and the \$28 million they generated for Custer County last spring from anglers could dry up. This doesn't make biological sense, and it doesn't make economic sense.

Exhibit 6 is a non-partisan Congressional Budget Office report on HR 3603 showing a cost to taxpayers of over \$187 million: more than \$31 million in authorizations and more than \$155 million in lost revenue from Section 302 alone. This doesn't include the

⁹ see text of July 22, 2003 letter from ICL to Simpson following testimony

¹⁰ excerpt from the aforementioned letter

sprinkling of an extra half million dollars here and there, or the \$4 million appropriation “to cover costs to complete the proposed land conveyances, establish and manage the proposed wilderness and management areas, and purchase certain patented mining claims.”¹¹

So we’re not only giving this land away; we’re paying millions of dollars to do it. With a soaring national debt, where is this money supposed to come from?

Section 302 not only attempts to rewrite the tax code to benefit owners of unpatented (i.e., unproven) mining claims; it characterizes the United States as a charity. I had no idea that the United States of America was a charity. This section clearly warrants review by the Finance Committee.

Congressman Simpson says CIEDRA resolves conflicts. The high level of controversy and significant opposition to this bill belies that claim. The truth is, CIEDRA *creates* conflicts. For example:

Title III creates a new bureaucracy, the Boulder-White Clouds Management Area, which overlays much of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. Even a lay person can see that Section 301’s language about the new designation being “supplemental to, but not in derogation of” the Sawtooth NRA is an open invitation for lawsuits.

Expert legal opinions support my concern. Erica Rosenberg, the Director of Program on Public Policy for Arizona State University College of Law, writes:

“The issue at hand is whether the language of Title III of CIEDRA establishing the Boulder-White Clouds Management Area (BWCMA) changes the management of those lands with the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA). The answer is yes.”¹²

Title III also takes management authority away from Forest Service and BLM land managers and gives it to the new bureaucracy. **Exhibit 7** is an Op-Ed by 10 retired managers of the Sawtooth NRA with an aggregate of over 83 years of “on the ground” experience managing the land in question. Their coalition is one of 47 national and local conservation groups (15 based in Idaho) and numerous individuals (from whom I’m told Senators Craig and Crapo are hearing in force) in opposing CIEDRA.

Idahoans and other Americans oppose CIEDRA for a variety of reasons, which has resulted in an unusual alignment of bedfellows who haven’t agreed on much for years. What opponents do agree on is that CIEDRA is bad for the land, bad for wildlife, and bad for people. This commonality could be something to build on, but not if CIEDRA passes.

¹¹ <http://www.cbo.gov/showdoc.cfm?index=7473&sequence=0>

¹² November 8, 2005 letter to Western Lands Project from Erica Rosenberg
This letter may be viewed at www.westernlands.org or www.caroleking.com

Local support is rapidly being outpaced by local opposition that continues to grow. The most recent highly visible example of this is the City of Stanley's withdrawal of their support (except for the land conveyances.)

I've heard Congressman Simpson say on several occasions that if no one's happy with his bill, he must be doing something right. This is a sad commentary on the process, and surely not a measure of good law. After a collegial chuckle, we still have a bill with which no one is happy.

Granting that CIEDRA was conceived with the best of intentions, Congressman Simpson's effort to resolve so many issues in a one-size-fits-all bill has turned out to be overly ambitious and misguided. Bottom line: the bill creates more problems than it solves.

Proponents try to downplay my residential and conservation credentials, but I have great affection for the many friends and neighbors in Custer County whom I've come to know and respect during the 25 years I've lived there. My neighbors understand that I'm an advocate for wilderness not only because of its intrinsic value, but because of its potential value as an economic engine for communities like ours.

Research increasingly shows that economic growth in such communities is roughly proportionate to the amount of protected wilderness nearby. Marketed widely as the largest intact protected wilderness in the lower 48, a greater Boulder-White Clouds Wilderness would be an irresistible draw for visitors from around the world, while businesses such as schools, field study centers and an observatory (which is already under way) would achieve economic success precisely *because* of their proximity to this unique, large, intact protected wilderness. The Teton Science Schools in Kelly, Wyoming have helped Teton County achieve economic success with only 3% private land.

If CIEDRA's wilderness were good, clean Wilderness Act-quality wilderness and not tied to overlays, giveaways and fiscal irresponsibility, with science, planning and economics thoughtfully considered, there would be enormous public support, including mine. Instead, CIEDRA gives us substandard wilderness, rendering the 1964 Wilderness Act meaningless and setting a precedent that legal experts consider a poor model for future wilderness bills.

I'm also a motorized vehicle user and an advocate for Bayhorse State Park in Custer County. Earlier this year I met with Lance Giles on Governor Kempthorne's public lands staff to ask that Bayhorse be put back on the Governor's list of state parks. I believe that Custer County and motorized users would benefit greatly from having a facility at Bayhorse with enough trails, campgrounds and other amenities to make it a world class motorized recreation destination.

CIEDRA takes a finite piece of pie and tries to divide it among too many people. I submit that the pie is bigger than the frame to which this bill is limited. If passed, CIEDRA will foreclose other options.

Why the haste in the House? Why the avoidance of scrutiny and a recorded vote? HR 3603 was jockeyed through markup and rushed through the House so quickly that the bill before you contains inaccuracies, omissions, and legal descriptions and maps that remained a moving target right up to the morning of passage.

Judging from CIEDRA's legislative history thus far, if no action is taken by this committee, I wouldn't be surprised to see HR 3603 turn up as a rider or an amendment to an omnibus bill later this session. That would be a shameful way to force a bill on the American people that does so much harm and ignores all the opposition I've documented.

Please join opponents in saying NO to CIEDRA. Idahoans and Americans deserve better.

Exhibits follow.

Exhibit 3

Cost of Community Services

Sonoran Institute Cost of Rapid Growth in Custer County, Colorado

<http://sonoran.org/pdfs/CostofRapidGrowth.pdf>

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Sonoran Institute Cost of Community Services in Custer County, Colorado

http://sonoran.org/programs/northern_rockies/pdf/Custer%20County%20Long%200%20Final.pdf

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University of Wyoming Cost of Community Services Study for Rural Wyoming

<http://www.uwyo.edu/openspaces/docs/community-service.pdf>

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American Farmland Trust Home Page

<http://www.farmland.org/>

American Farmland Trust Publications Page

<http://www.farmland.org/resources/publications/default.asp>

Kent County, Maryland

http://www.farmland.org/programs/states/documents/delmarvaCOCSKentCountyMD1_12_03.pdf

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Wicomico County, Maryland

<http://www.farmland.org/programs/states/documents/delmarvaCOCSWicomico1-13-03.pdf>

Page 5

Hays County, Texas

http://www.farmland.org/programs/states/documents/AFT_COCS_HaysCounty_Texas.pdf

Page 2

Bandera County, Texas

<http://www.farmland.org/resources/reports/texas/default.asp>

Pages 3-5

Skagit County, Washington

http://www.farmland.org/pnw/Skagit_County_COCS.pdf

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Exhibit 4

**Excerpt from Statement of Joel Holtrop
Deputy Chief, National Forest System,
US Forest Service
United States Department of Agriculture
Before the
Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health
Committee on Resources
United States House of Representatives
October 27, 2005**

Concerning

**H. R. 3603 – Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act National
Forest**

TITLE II – Central Idaho Wilderness Areas

This title would add additional areas in central Idaho to the National Wilderness Preservation System – 96,700 acres in the Sawtooth and Challis National Forests to be known as the “Ernest Hemingway - Boulder Wilderness,” 73,100 acres in the Sawtooth and Challis National Forests to be known as the “White Clouds Wilderness,” and approximately 131,700 acres in the Challis National Forest and Challis District of the Bureau of Land Management to be known as “Jerry Peak Wilderness.” The Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior would collaborate to develop a Comprehensive Wilderness Management Plan for the designated wilderness areas.

The Department supports the wilderness designations as proposed with some minor modifications. We would like to work with the committee and bill sponsor to modify the boundaries to better align with natural landscape features and to reduce the potential for conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users. We have concern with some management provisions in sections 204, 205, 207, 208 and 209. These provisions could be interpreted as authorizing non-conforming uses. The applicable provisions in the Wilderness Act of 1964 are adequate for administering the areas designated as wilderness by this title. We also would like to work with the committee and bill sponsor to clarify language on adjacent management, wildfire management, wildlife management, Native American culture and religious uses, and military overflights.

Exhibit 5

Text of July 22, 2003 Letter from Rick Johnson and the Board of Directors of Idaho Conservation League to Representative Mike Simpson

July 22, 2003

Representative Mike Simpson
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Dear Congressman Simpson:

The board of Directors of the Idaho Conservation League appreciates your considerable work to develop a proposal for central Idaho that includes wilderness designation for the Boulder and White Cloud Mountains, and, we hope, other important areas. Political leadership is a rare commodity, and we thank you for stepping forward. We have discussed issues including and associated with wilderness in central Idaho with you for several years now.

Your works at our Wild Idaho conference this past May – “let’s hope we’re gathered again in a year to celebrate” – reflect the progress you have made. It is in the spirit of creating a proposal we can all be proud of that we write today. This letter summarizes an extensive discussion at our July 11-13, 2003, Idaho Conservation League Board meeting.

We want to provide our thoughts on several issues that we understand are now being considered in your office. We understand there is no written proposal at this time, and that issues and discussions are continually evolving. We feel it is important that you know our thoughts on the issues of importance to the Idahoans we represent.

The Idaho Conservation League has board, staff, and members who know this area intimately over many years. The knowledge and needs of Idahoans are critical to this discussion. We write as your constituents, and as people who know this land very, very well.

Wilderness

Boulder-White Clouds

The wilderness component of your prospective legislative proposal is of vital importance to the Idaho Conservation League. There is little debate that it is the catalyst for this entire package. It is important that the wilderness component is done well. We have described a “good” wilderness boundary for several years in this way: protect the high peaks and lakes of the White Cloud Mountains, protect the high peaks and

valleys of the Boulder Mountains, and protect the open ridges, peaks and valleys of the east side of the area, all in one intact wilderness designation, not bisected with motorized corridors. The boundary we have proposed to you meets this test. Our comments on what we understand you are considering are based on that test.

Wilderness Boundaries – Section 1. Three extraordinary omissions are being contemplated in apparent concession to snowmobile interest. Each is troubling in itself; taken together they represent a major degradation of wilderness values and traditional uses of the areas recognized since the creation of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area in 1972, and the first Forest Service wilderness recommendation in 1972. We are deeply concerned and strongly opposed to all three exclusions.

North Fork of the Big Wood River: Tens of thousands of Americans enter the Big Wood River Valley from the south every year, and are greeted by one of the most spectacular signature mountain views of the West. To the best of our knowledge, that view is not included in your working proposal. It is essential the wilderness boundaries include all the USFS proposed wilderness in the North Fork of the Big Wood River watershed. This is the premier wilderness gateway for the Ketchum and Sun Valley area, it is immediately adjacent to the headquarters of the Sawtooth NRA, it provides tens of thousands of visitors with their entry point to the central Idaho, and it is very important to Blaine County's economy.

Snowmobiles are excluded from nearly all of this country by either geography or existing regulation. Access into the North Fork of the Big Wood canyon is closed to snow machines. On the other hand, the canyon is visited and used by thousands of hikers and skiers every year. We know the area is part of an agreement reached during the Wood River Valley Winter Recreation Coalition negotiations. Negotiators in those talks representing the overwhelming majority of existing users of the area explicitly said, on the record, that later wilderness discussions would not be prejudiced by the agreement.

This area is the closest connection to the proposed Boulder-White Clouds wilderness from SNRA headquarters and the Wood River Valley. It must be in the designated wilderness. Local governments, recreation interests, community leaders, and residents support this position. We strongly urge you to meet with them.

Fourth of July Trailhead, Champion Lakes: The Fourth of July trailhead is by far the most popular access to the White Clouds, according to Forest Service data. The trail register contains names of visitors from all over America. It is one of the best access points in all of Idaho for families, children, and seniors to reach the high country and a mountain lake that is only 1.5 miles from the car with Washington Lake a short added mile beyond. The road accessing the trailhead was upgraded several years ago for just this purpose: to accommodate a typical family or tourist rental car. It is an access point commonly recommended by guidebooks, the Forest Service, and local residents when asked for a short, quiet family hike. The overwhelming majority of users are on foot. Motorized recreation is inappropriate in this area because of safety and noise issues, as well as wildlife issues we describe below.

Mountain goat numbers in the Fourth of July area are in decline. Idaho Department of Fish and Game data for this Idaho icon shows that the population has declined by more than 50 percent in the last few years. Although there is no information we are aware of that explains the specific reason for the decline, one thing is clear: goats that are forced to move away from human intrusion in winter and expend critical energy may be unable to reproduce or survive, putting the entire population at risk. This decline has occurred at the same time as winter use of the area by expert snowmobilers has grown; “high-lining” in the area is a recent phenomena and could be responsible for the decline. The area should be closed to snowmobiles. The high country of the Fourth of July area should probably be closed by the Forest Service to skiers as well, but that is an administrative action they need to take. Wilderness helps address this issue; a Congressionally-sanctioned snowmobile loop will only increase conflict, thus creating a major management problem for the future.

Excluding the Fourth of July to Washington Basin area from wilderness, in order to allow a motorized loop, directly contradicts and overturns the long established use pattern of the area. Such exclusion will be, and should be, highly unpopular with users of the trail who will expect this to be a quality wilderness experience.

The loss of the Champion Lakes area to wilderness, in order to allow this motorized loop, compounds the damage from this exclusion. Champion Lakes is a popular and relatively short wilderness trip because of access, reasonably easy terrain, great fishing, and high quality habitat for backcountry hunting. Its wildlife habitat links directly to the high peaks of the White Clouds, namely Champion Lakes, Phyllis Lake, Thunder Lake, Lightning Lake, Heart Lake and Six Lakes Basin. These are some of the premier family lake trips in the whole range. It has all been proposed for wilderness since 1972 for these reasons.

Warm Springs Meadows: In discussions of wilderness or wildlife preservation, low-elevation habitat is a premium concern. Warm Springs Meadows is a fragile and rare place providing excellent big-game cover and forage, habitat for a variety of other species, opportunities for hunting, and wildlife viewing. It is also a great place to hike and enjoy an early season, low-elevation wilderness experience in the center of one of the White Clouds major unroaded and pristine watersheds. One of our board members considers an elk hunt in this region as one of the best traditional hunting experiences he has had in a lifetime of hunting all over Idaho. Warm Springs Meadows should be kept whole as should Warm Springs Creek. To the best of our knowledge, you are considering motorized access right into the meadows while proposing the upper and lower portions of Warm Springs Creek for wilderness.

Wilderness Boundaries – Section 2: In this section, three boundary issues are of major concern to the citizens of Blaine County. All of this land is in Blaine County, and is important to its economy, sense of community, and identity. It is land nearly everyone living there knows and sees. It all has high wilderness values and will measurably enhance local political support for this proposal.

Front Range of the Boulder Mountains: There are portions of the front range of the Boulders that travelers of Highway 75 see driving north towards Galena Lodge that should and could easily be party of the wilderness. This is wilderness you can see from the road that is above the snow-machine high lines and is located in portions of the valley where snow-machine travel is banned. There are no conflicts in these areas, and we strongly believe that wilderness should be part of the view from the valley floor, as it is in the Sawtooths.

We are referring to the front range of the Boulder Mountains from a line roughly starting at Silver Peak/Silver Lake down to the bench just slightly above the Russian John Ranger Station, then northwesterly along the bench to behind Galena Lodge and the roads behind it, then up Galena Pass and then to tie in to our proposed boundary at the top of the Pass.

Lake Creek and Eagle Creek: This area is immediately south of the North Fork of the Big Wood area we described in the Section 1 above. We suggest you continue the boundary south from Murdoch Creek to include Eagle Creek and Lake Creek, as has long been proposed by the conservation community and Blaine County officials. This area is closed to snowmobile use and is highly visible wilderness for Blaine County.

Durance area and the North Fork: Directly west of the North Fork of the Big Wood drainage road, we encourage you to include the Amber Lakes, Goat Creek, Konrad Creek, Goat Peak and Durance Peak area. Once again, this is in the area closed to snowmobiles. It is also highly visible wilderness from Highway 75 and the Ketchum and Sun Valley area. It is strongly supported in tourist-based Blaine County.

Wilderness Boundaries – Section 3: Here we address areas where steps are needed to ensure the wilderness experience is fully protected. Based on limited knowledge, we believe you are working to build a proposal that captures the wilderness values of the east side of the White Clouds. We encourage you to continue that work by addressing the boundary issue on the North Fork of the Big Lost.

North Fork of the Big Lost Canyon: The wilderness boundaries should come down to the trailheads at all trails originating on the north side of the North Fork of the Big Lost River Road. The trails on this side of the road provide access to the high ridges around Herd Peak. The vegetation on the ridges is fragile and cannot survive the cross-country and trail pioneering use that are starting to occur from ATVs if this area is not protected. This is high quality wildlife habitat. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game describes the area from Herd Peak highlands down through the East Fork of Herd Creek and East Pass Creek as a “bull elk haven.” An ICL Board member saw 175 elk there in November, and on one summer ICL public hike we saw a herd of over 50. Wilderness protection is one of the very best ways to ensure that these hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities are preserved into the future.

Frog Lake: This is the second most popular trailhead for hikers in the western White Clouds according to USFS data. It is a popular destination for Boy Scout troops seeking primitive outdoor experiences. As an indication of its popularity, one of the reasons the USFS has proposed closing the area to grazing is the growing list of complaints they receive from recreationists who are concerned about the degraded conditions around the lake. Further, consistent USFS data shows hikers outnumber motorized users 10 to 1.

West Pass Creek: We believe the base USFS map to be incorrect here, and therefore suggest that the wilderness boundary be brought down to where the road becomes impassable. This eliminates much of a long cherry stem that really is not there on the ground due to the extremely degraded condition of the road.

Wilderness Boundaries – Section 4: In this section we would like to address areas which have not received much attention in our discussions with you to date, but which have high wilderness values and little to no conflicts. These include Potoman Peak, Horse Butte, Anderson, and the Lake Creek area of Herd Creek. We would encourage you to examine the boundary details of the conservation proposal for the area. We are in the midst of an extraordinary opportunity to do the right thing for the land; many of the areas discussed above are high-profile and have been debated for years. They are also well known and recognized and have no conflicts with user groups you have been working with. There are other portions of the proposal are less well known, yet also are without conflict, and deserve wilderness protection in your proposal. We encourage you to consider the whole proposal with equal consideration.

Railroad Ridge is a place rich with history and of rare beauty. We support retaining existing roaded access to the area, but encourage you to protect the unroaded area as wilderness. This retains and preserves the best of current use: road access to the Ridge, and protection of the wild values everyone drives there to experience. For example, rare and varied plants flourish at 10,000 feet providing unparalleled opportunities for scientific study. The USFS has determined that Railroad Ridge supports some of the most unique and well-developed alpine plant communities in Idaho and that it is more botanically diverse than most alpine communities in North America. The area is currently closed to motorized use except on designated roads. Illegal cross-country travel by ATVs could cause irreparable harm to these plant communities and spread noxious weeds.

Wilderness Boundaries – Conclusion: We began this section with the general themes we and others have articulated for many years regarding what makes a “good” wilderness proposal in the Boulder-White Clouds: protect the high peaks and lakes of the White Cloud Mountains, protect the high peaks and valleys of the Boulders Mountains, and protect the open ridges, peaks and valleys of the east side, all in one intact area, not bisected with motorized corridors.

We want to reemphasize how important it is that the Boulder-White Clouds wilderness not be bisected with a motorized corridor. The long-discussed locations are Germania Creek and the West Fork of the East Fork and Grand Prize Gulch. This issue has been

front and center in debates on past wilderness initiatives, and contributed greatly to their failure. These drainages include high quality, low elevation wildlife habitat, and are vital to the success of this current endeavor. Forest Service data shows equal and light use by motorcycles and hikers.

Finally, throughout our discussions with you on this proposal, boundaries are being discussed on ridgetops. We strongly suggest, to the greatest extent possible, that boundaries meaningfully move down from ridgetops as demonstrated throughout the conservationists' wilderness proposal. This helps protect watersheds, and it helps protect views that have become Idaho icons. These lines matter a great deal. Moving boundaries down into watersheds add clarity for land managers; such clarity saves taxpayer money and benefits the land.

Pioneer Mountains

At various times in this discussion, the Pioneer Mountains have been considered for inclusion. This area is strongly supported for wilderness in the communities surrounding it, and would be an excellent addition to the Wilderness Preservation System. Since discussions around this area are less advanced, we will not comment on specific boundary issues here. We express strong support for the conservation proposal we have provided to you.

Smokies and Mt. Borah

The Smoky Mountains and Mt. Borah have also been sometimes considered in this discussion. Again, we have long advocated protection for both, and have detailed wilderness proposals for them. In the Smokies, a recent Wilderness Society project provided very important analysis of the values and land uses found in this area. We support the conclusions of this work.

Economic enhancements for affected counties

Custer County

Idaho's rural economics are in a tough transition, as we all know. You have made clear that a fundamental goal of your central Idaho proposal is to provide benefit for the affected counties, with special focus on Custer County. We understand your commitment to this goal. We believe the help you provide should be designed to facilitate the key catalysts for creating positive impact.

First, a "crown jewel" Boulder-White Clouds and Pioneer Mountains Wilderness will create such positive impact. An ever-increasing body of research demonstrates a positive relationship between economic growth and the amount of land in protected wilderness status. The economic value of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area, and Sawtooth Wilderness, to Custer Blaine, Boise, and Elmore Counties is abundantly clear. So is the

economic value of the Frank Church Wilderness to Custer, Lemhi, Valley and Idaho Counties which share in it.

As a recent Sonoran Institute report states, “protection of environmental amenities and recreational opportunities is a necessary but not sufficient condition for economic growth.” We strongly suggest that you focus on projects that do, in fact, foster long-term economic transition as you craft your proposal. These include, but are not limited to fostering an educated workforce with locally based education facilities, and amenities that attract and retain an entrepreneurial spirit in a community.

Blaine County

For obvious reasons, your discussion of economic enhancement has focused on Custer Country. But there are large number of Idahoans in Blaine County with very clear needs and wishes for your legislation: create the biggest Boulder-White Cloud wilderness possible, and also include Pioneer Mountains.

Working Around the White Clouds, Sonoran Institute, April 2003. www.sonoran.org

Wilderness means business to Blaine County. Wilderness for the Boulders, White Clouds, and Pioneers is strongly supported by local governments, businesses, community leaders, and the people of Sun Valley, Ketchum, Hailey and Bellevue.

We support your deliberative discussions to try to create economic benefit for Custer Country. We also urge you to spend time listening to the leaders and people of Blaine County. We believe you will hear that the best way to serve their community and economic interest is by creating a large wilderness, accessible and visible from the communities and local trailheads. The proposal you are currently considering, to the best of our knowledge, fails to do that, and has not had the benefit of direct discussions with community leaders.

Ranching

From the very beginning of all wilderness discussions with you in the White Clouds, there has been the need to address ranching issues, particularly in the East Fork of the Salmon River.

We support the purchase of grazing allotments in the East Fork of the Salmon River area and development of conservation easements. We do not support land trades or transfers to accomplish this goal, and we are confident they are not necessary.

Funding mechanisms

We acknowledge that economic enhancements are an important component to your proposal if it is to meet your purposes. For that reason, we have an interest in ensuring the enhancements are reasonable, achieve the desired benefit, and do not attract strong

opposition from us or others which may threaten the entire proposal. Based on our knowledge of the options you are considering, one potential funding mechanism is particularly troubling to us.

Selling public land

We oppose inclusion of the conveyance of public land for later private sale as an element to your proposal.

The conservation community in general, and the Idaho Conservation League in particular, has long opposed the general sale of public land. We strongly fought the proposals of the 1980s Sagebrush Rebellion, and prevailed. We have opposed public land transfers to states that could have resulted in private sales, and have generally prevailed. America's public lands are a national birthright. The public lands within Idaho's borders are also good for Idaho, and their value to Idaho is steadily increasing.

In the last month, many other organizations and individuals inside and outside of Idaho, representing conservation, recreation, fishing and hunting interests have contacted us in opposition to this concept. We agree with them. The public lands surrounding the SNRA and White Clouds are heavily-used, with management in most cases that is already complex and controversial. It is hard to imagine where specific lands could be identified for conveyance and later sale that would not bring forth these wildlife, access, use, and other legitimate concerns. In this case, and given this opposition, we believe your practical agenda of passing legislation and our principled objections in this case coincide.

Finally, we do not think public land conveyance, even if remotely desirable, will effectively produce the desired economic enhancement to local counties. The track record in other cases is not particularly good. The cumbersome combined workings of federal procedure and private marketplace can easily leave the affected counties on the sidelines. We believe direct appropriations are a far more effective way to achieve economic enhancement goals, and conservation groups including ours are far more likely to be able to support them.

Conclusion

We trust you will consider our concerns seriously. We also ask that you meet, as you have with other local communities and interests, with elected officials and business interests of Blaine County to discuss your progress and hear their views.

We thank you, and Lindsay Slater, and Laurel Hall for your considerable work to hopefully create a proposal for central Idaho that contains a good wilderness designation for the Boulder-White Cloud Mountains. While we have specific and deep concerns with your proposal, we support your leadership. Our staff will continue their forthright work with you towards the goal of passing the best bill for all of Idaho, and for our great country, that includes the core wilderness values we have been discussing.

We understand and accept your broader goals, but we again encourage you to support a wilderness designation that fully honors and protects the beauty, solitude, and use by Idahoans and Americans alike of this remarkable area. Frank Church and Jim McClure will be honored forever, by local communities and visiting families alike, for the legacy of the River of No Return Wilderness, the Sawtooth National Recreation Area, and the Sawtooth Wilderness. Your legislation can become the next piece of that legacy.

You have done considerable work to date, and we recognize there is more to do. History will undoubtedly demonstrate its value. Thanks you for considering these detailed recommendations. The Idaho Conservation League Board of Directors and staff stand ready to assist as best we can with the work that remains.

Sincerely

The Idaho Conservation League Board of Directors

Rick Johnson, executive director

Exhibit 7
(2 pages)

Guest opinion by Coalition of Concerned Forest Service Land Managers

SNRA land giveaways totally inappropriate

The Coalition of Retired Forest Service Land Managers comprises
Ralph Cisco, District Ranger, Sawtooth Valley Ranger District, 1962 to 1972;
Tom Kovalicky, Assistant SNRA Superintendent, 1972 to 1977;
Allan Ashton, SNRA Superintendent, 1977 to 1987;
David Hofer, Assistant SNRA Area Ranger, 1978 to 1987;
Carl Pence, SNRA Area Ranger, 1987 to 1992;
Deon Wells, SNRA Lands Specialist, 1975 to 1994;
Jeff Jones, SNRA Mineral Examiner, 1983 to 1990 ;
Ed Bloedel, Sawtooth National Forest Recreation and Lands Staff Officer, 1987 to 1991;
Frank Rowland, SNRA Interpretive Specialist, 1976 to 1986;
and Scott Phillips, SNRA Dispersed Recreation Manager, 1986 to 1991.

We commend Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson and his staff for some sustained work in tackling the longstanding Boulder-White Clouds wilderness issue, which includes lands within the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA). However, there is a major problem with the Central Idaho Development and Recreation Act (CIEDRA)—specifically—the unacceptable giveaways of precious SNRA lands for development to Custer County and the City of Stanley. These 162 acres in three parcels near Stanley include crucial elk wintering range, Valley Creek Chinook salmon and steelhead habitat, wetlands, and world class views of the Sawtooth Mountains.

Public Law 92-400 is the legal cornerstone that established the SNRA in 1972. The law clearly states that the primary purposes of the SNRA will be to "preserve the natural, scenic, historic, pastoral, wildlife and recreational values" for all Americans. The key point: The SNRA was established as A National Recreation Area and not as a local "economic development area." It does not appear legally appropriate for any elected official to take a public policy stance opposite of the congressional intent and spirit of Public Law 92-400.

We strongly urge Rep. Simpson to remove any language or part of his bill, including the SNRA land giveaways, that would undermine or substantially impair the values for which the SNRA was established. The American public has invested heavily in SNRA land protections. Since 1972, approximately \$65 million taxpayer dollars (\$7.5 million in 2005 alone) have been wisely spent to purchase land or acquire scenic easements on private land parcels within the SNRA to prevent subdivisions and commercial developments.

A few local officials in Stanley and Custer County support acquiring the 162 acres for commercial development. They accuse local citizens in opposition of NIMBYISM.

Translated--"not in my back yard." This shallow thinking is erroneous. Precious hard won SNRA public lands belong to all Americans and are our common natural heritage. This is a national issue, not to be decided by the short-term economic desires of any particular Idaho city or county. Privatization of prime SNRA lands is a totally inappropriate means to an end to achieve wilderness designation.

Long-term economic benefits will be enhanced for the Stanley community if the adjacent irreplaceable assets remain in public SNRA ownership. Continued protection of the scenic views, riparian ecology, wildlife, and fisheries will translate to significant economic benefits for local businesses 50 and 200 years down the road. Additionally, in section 6 of Public Law 92-400 there are objectives for the "restoration and maintenance of the historic setting and background of the frontier ranch type town of Stanley."

As concerned Forest Service land managers who worked professionally on the SNRA or in the Sawtooth Forest supervisor's office, we specifically recommend that Rep. Simpson reconsider the land giveaways. If the giveaways cannot be taken out of CIEDRA, then we strongly recommend that the bill be rejected

We urge all Americans to contact the Idaho congressional delegation and Congress and insist that there be no SNRA land giveaways under any circumstances. Unprincipled regression to commercial development of SNRA lands is legally wrong, financially backwards, and ethically unconscionable. Future generations deserve proper stewardship of the SNRA now.
