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Testimony of Rick Johnson, Executive Director, Idaho Conservation League

Before the US Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests

Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Regarding S. 3294, the Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act

June 16, 2010 – Washington, DC

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today. My name is Rick Johnson and I am the executive director of the Idaho Conservation League. I ask that these comments be included in the hearing record.

The Idaho Conservation League was founded in 1973 and our mission is to protect Idaho's clean air and water, wilderness, and the outdoor values that provide Idaho its extraordinary quality of life.

The Idaho Conservation League strongly supports this legislation and we have worked with members of the Idaho congressional delegation, particularly, Rep. Mike Simpson, to advance various forms of this measure for nearly a decade. I personally have worked to protect this area for over 25 years. I have been the executive director of the Idaho Conservation League for the past 15 years and our organization has worked with every member of the Idaho congressional delegation to craft common sense solutions on a variety of conservation measures over many years.

The Idaho Conservation League's strategic approach to conservation has evolved over time, and across a broad portfolio of work, we have become Idaho's leading voice for conservation. Our work in the Boulder-White Clouds initiative has been a major catalyst to our development of collaborative approaches to conservation on issues ranging from energy, mercury pollution, mining, engagement with major businesses already in or seeking to locate in Idaho, open space protection, and what brings us here today: public land protection.

Our work with members of the Idaho delegation to create Idaho-based solutions for federal lands in Idaho has not always been popular, but we've learned that leadership is about doing what is right for the land and people. Here in the Boulder-White Clouds, some of our allies and friends believe we have compromised too much. This has been expressed over

the years in local forums and congressional forums such as this. In recent weeks, the right flank has been criticizing the Idaho delegation, all of whom are sponsors of this bill.

The stature of our nation is not shaped by shrill voices from the left or the right. The stature of our nation rests on the shoulders of increasingly frustrated hard-working people who stand squarely in the center, people who are tired of politics of polarization and seek common sense solutions built from good ideas crafted from various interests and points of view. They seek balance. And they seek progress.

This legislation is the culmination of a long attempt to provide that for a special part of Idaho.

The Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act (CIEDRA) is commonsense conservation that protects a great part of the American West, yet does so by incorporating the needs of people who live and work around the affected landscape.

This bill was written by building bridges. This legislation has been before the U.S. Congress for many years. It is based on compromise, collaboration, and good faith negotiations concluded with handshakes, all values and actions we see too little of today. It is time for the Idaho congressional delegation to affirmatively join with your colleagues and cross the bridge we have built together, demonstrating that Idaho can continue to be a leader in spanning the gulf that often separates federal land management with the daily concerns of the people who live there.

This is not a perfect bill. But it is a good bill. It should pass and now is the time.

Background

Before the late 1960s few people knew anything about the Boulder-White Cloud Mountains of Central Idaho. That began to change in 1968. The American Smelting and Refining Company proposed an open-pit molybdenum mine at the base of Castle Peak—an aptly named monolith that rises well above the surrounding peaks in the center of the White Clouds. The mining industry had never faced any considerable opposition in Idaho. In fact, the contribution of the industry to the state's economy is recognized in Idaho's nickname, "The Gem State."

The proposed mine ignited a controversy that the mining industry had never encountered in Idaho before. When the state endorsed the proposed mine, the Director of the Idaho Department of Parks board, Ernest Day, resigned his post. His aerial photos of Castle Peak helped to illustrate to the public where the proposed open pit mine would be located right at the foot of Castle Peak.

Coincidentally a young Cecil Andrus was running for governor. Andrus took the position that this very special part of Central Idaho was too important to sacrifice. In 1970, Andrus won the election largely because of the stance that he took on the need to preserve the Boulder-White Clouds.

Two years later Senator Frank Church successfully moved legislation through Congress to designate the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and Wilderness. The national recreation area withdrew the area surrounding Castle Peak from mining but punted on the issue of wilderness designation for the Boulder-White Clouds, leaving the decision to a future Congress by directing the Forest Service to study the area for possible future wilderness designation.

Public support

Before I get into details of the bill, I would like to set some context regarding where the citizens of Idaho are when it comes to this legislation. A lot of folks suggest they know what the public thinks when they are seeking to influence public policy. While I do not suggest that public opinion alone should set the direction of legislation, we have recently seen advertising against this bill include creative use of public opinion research.

The Idaho Conservation League just commissioned a public opinion poll regarding the Boulder-White Clouds. The poll was in the field statewide in Idaho June 4 and 5 with a sample of 400 voters. Our long-time pollster is Bob Moore of Moore Information, a firm that has long worked in Idaho for top-tier business and political clients and is currently working with various Republican office holders in Idaho. I believe I am on firm ground when I say Moore Information is one of the most respected gauges of public opinion working in Idaho. We assiduously worked to ensure the polling instrument was fair.

In Bob Moore's words:

"After respondents hear a summary of the bill, it is favored by a two-to-one margin (59-30%). There is consensus support throughout the state among most voter subgroups. Most widely supportive are Democrats (79-13%), but there is majority support among Independents (57-30%) and plurality support among GOP voters as well (50-41%). Snowmobilers (8% of the voting population) are the only subgroup who opposes the bill. Dirt bike, motorcycle riders and off-road vehicle users are divided in their opinions and a majority of hunting and fishing enthusiasts are supportive."

"In addition to exploring overall support for CIEDRA we also asked about five of the bill's specific components. All five generate 57% support or higher as shown by the following table."

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CIEDRA elements	Favor	Don't know	Oppose	Net favor
Most motorized trails in the area would be managed exactly as they are today. One trail would be closed to motorized use and other trails would be remain open and accessible for motorized use (Q12)	66%	11%	23%	+43%
The bill would transfer some federal lands and monies to local governments to support public services and would facilitate economic development in the area (Q11)	62%	12%	26%	+36%
About 330,000 acres of public lands would be designated wilderness. This wilderness designation means the area would remain open to livestock grazing and most types of recreation, including hunting, camping, horseback riding and fishing, but new roads, mining, drilling, mountain biking, and recreational off-road vehicles would be prohibited (Q10)	58%	7%	35%	+23%
The bill was introduced and is supported by every member of Idaho's Congressional delegation (Q14)	57%	20%	23%	+34%
Traditional uses, such as livestock grazing, will be allowed, ranchers who wish to voluntarily sell their public grazing allotments could be bought out with non-government funds (Q13)	57%	14%	29%	+28%

In addition to the overall public support demonstrated by this poll, the collaborative efforts to address longstanding public land issues in this landscape, including wilderness designation, are supported by prominent Idaho leaders from both political parties, including Cecil Andrus (D), former Governor of Idaho and Former Secretary of the Department of Interior, James McClure (R), former Idaho U.S. Senator and past chairman of this committee, and Bethine Church, wife of the late Frank Church, former Idaho U.S. Senator and one of the great conservation advocates to have served in the Senate.

More than 150 Idaho businesses support Congressman Simpson's efforts to protect the Boulder-White Clouds area as wilderness.

The two affected counties, Blaine and Custer, as well as most of the affected city and town governments, have passed resolutions supporting Boulder-White Clouds wilderness, economic and recreation protection legislation.

Although the timber industry has not formally endorsed CIEDRA, representatives for timber interests have said they have no interest in a timber harvest in the Boulder-White Clouds area due to the small amount of timber resources in comparison to extraction costs.

Wilderness designations

The Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act would bring closure to the Boulder-White Clouds wilderness debate that has lingered since 1972. S. 3294 would designate approximately 332,775 acres of wilderness in the Boulder-White Clouds, including the proposed White Clouds, Hemingway-Boulders and Jerry Peak Wilderness Areas. These important designations would protect 150 peaks over 10,000 feet in elevation, headwaters of four Idaho rivers, spawning beds for salmon, habitat for wildlife and backcountry destinations for hikers, hunters, anglers, campers and generations of Americans to come.

CIEDRA would repeal the wilderness study area provision for the Boulder-White Clouds that has remained unresolved since 1972. Similarly, S. 3294 will resolve the impasse over four Bureau of Land Management wilderness study areas. This legislation will release the entire Corral-Horse Basin Wilderness Study Area and portions of the Jerry Peak, Jerry Peak West and Boulder Creek Wilderness Study Areas for multiple use management.

If Congress passes this legislation, 51,100 acres of Forest Service lands currently recommended for wilderness designation in the Sawtooth National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan will not be designated as Wilderness. Nearly 80,500 acres of wilderness study areas managed by the Bureau of Land Management will be released for multiple use management. This is a combined total of 131,500 acres of public lands in Central Idaho that are currently managed as de facto Wilderness that will no longer be studied for wilderness designation.

The Idaho Conservation League believes that many of these eligible yet not included areas exemplify extraordinary wilderness character and, to be candid, this has given us pause.

Why? Because these areas were not proposed for wilderness in the extraordinary measures the bill sponsors took to provide access for motorized recreation. Places long recommended by the U.S. Forest Service for wilderness were left out to provide snowmobile access. Trails we believe should become wilderness were left out to provide trail machine access for all time.

While these boundary and language concessions have troubled our organization, we support them because balance among stakeholders is how collaborative and successful legislation moves forward.

Across this landscape Rep. Mike Simpson has worked hard on many levels, and one was to make us understand that many interests are involved in the Boulder-White Clouds proposal and if the Idaho Conservation League wants to see progress and lasting success, we have to not only accept needs of others, we ultimately had to become an advocate for them. We've come to acknowledge and appreciate this fact, and we commend Congressman Simpson for working relentlessly to take into account the diversity of these interests. S. 3294 is a well-constructed piece of legislation that is the right thing to do for Central Idaho both economically and ecologically. The places protected by designating the 332,775 acres of wilderness proposed in CIEDRA are extraordinary, and while places left out are important and worthy, the final result achieved by this legislation outweighs any pause for concern that the Idaho Conservation League may have once had.

Grazing

It is a common misconception that the Wilderness Act of 1964 prohibits grazing operations in wilderness. As this Committee is fully aware, established grazing operations are permitted within designated wilderness areas. S. 3294 is consistent with the Wilderness Act by allowing existing grazing operations to continue in the proposed White Clouds, Hemingway-Boulders and Jerry Peak Wilderness Areas.

CIEDRA also provides a mechanism for willing ranchers to retire their grazing leases and permits and receive fair compensation for the termination of their grazing rights. When a rancher chooses to voluntarily retire their grazing rights, fair compensation will be paid by private funding sources already lined up. This important provision has no negative fiscal impact on the federal budget and ensures that the quality of rangelands and wildlife habitat in the Boulder-White Clouds will only improve over time.

Outfitting and Guiding

S. 3294 allows outfitting and guiding operations within the proposed wilderness areas when such ventures lead to the realization of the values of wilderness protections in the Boulder-White Clouds.

State Jurisdiction over Fish and Wildlife

This legislation does not affect the State of Idaho's jurisdiction over the management of fish and game species within the wilderness areas designated by Title I (See Section 102(g)(1)). The Idaho Department of Fish and Game will continue to regulate hunting and fishing activities within and outside the wilderness areas designated by CIEDRA.

When the Idaho Department of Fish and Game believes that it is necessary to take active steps to manage or monitor populations of fish and game species within the wilderness areas designated by CIEDRA, the Department will have authority to do so, as it always has.

The preservation of 332,775 acres in three new wilderness areas will also benefit hunters and anglers by protecting important habitat for deer, elk, pronghorn, mountain goats, bears, salmon, steelhead, trout and numerous other species. Because wilderness designation is the highest level of protection afforded by Congress, the wilderness

designations in CIEDRA will provide a positive and lasting benefit for species of fish and game by enhancing and protecting their habitat. More productive and pristine habitat means that hunters and anglers will find healthier and stronger populations of fish and game in the Boulder-White Clouds. The lasting result is a legacy for generations of sportsmen to come.

State of Idaho Endowment Lands

Within the boundaries of the proposed Jerry Peak Wilderness, there are four entire sections of state endowment lands as well as portions of four other sections. Section 107(2) of CIEDRA requires that "...the Secretary shall seek to complete an exchange for State land located within the boundaries of the wilderness areas designated by this title."

This requirement should be seen by the State of Idaho as a win-win scenario. The majority of these state lands are currently accessible by hiking or horseback only. Furthermore, these sections of state lands are isolated from one another. As a result, these endowment lands realize little financial return to the state endowment for public schools.

The exchange required by CIEDRA will provide the opportunity for the State of Idaho to exchange and consolidate state endowment lands in locations where more revenue can be generated for the Idaho endowment fund for public schools. CIEDRA also expedites this exchange by requiring a three-year time limitation. If the State of Idaho is concerned that this exchange will not take place in a timely fashion, Congress might choose to appropriate the necessary financial resources for the Bureau of Land Management to complete the exchange.

A few myths about CIEDRA related to motorized access

Before addressing the motorized recreation provisions in detail, we would like to address issues that have recently gained traction.

In recent months we have heard charges that this bill was written without input from the motorized community.

In fact, when Rep. Simpson began the long path to this hearing today, he met with the following motorized recreation groups: : the Blue Ribbon Coalition, the Idaho State Snowmobile Association, Magic Valley Trail Machine Association, Idaho Trail Machine Association, Treasure Valley Trail Machine Association, Idaho Recreation Council, and the Idaho Mountain Biking Association.

In recent months motorized community leaders have suggested they were cut out of the stakeholder process and indicated they're upset the bill before us today doesn't include a Boulder-White Clouds Management Area that was incorporated into previous versions of CIEDRA.

This provision established a management area that surrounded the proposed wilderness like a donut. This would have made current motorized trails outside of the wilderness permanently open by law, no longer subject to agency discretion and management.

Republican majority staff working for then-Chairman of the House Resources Committee, Rep. Richard Pombo, expressed what a good deal this was for motorized recreation. Yet motorized recreation organizations never expressed support for this provision.

Collaborative work, in our view, rests on your record, and we believe it is disingenuous for these same groups to suggest that one of the main reasons to oppose CIEDRA now is because it does not include the management area they never supported in the past. The reality is this doesn't matter on the ground, however, because all of the trails that would have been open to motorized use within the management area in previous versions of the bill are still open under the current version.

Some motorized opponents to CIEDRA say it will close 895 miles of motorized and mountain bike trails.

This is factually wrong.

Our analysis suggests that total motorized trail closures under this bill will be 35 miles. Mountain bike trails that will be closed total 218 miles. These closures in no way represent a serious drop in overall capacity for Idaho recreationists, capacity that has been hailed by the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation as "one of the largest designated trail systems in the country with approximately 19,000 miles of summer trails and 8,000 miles of winter trails." The issue of what trails and routes will remain open in CIEDRA is addressed more below.

There have been recent claims that the delegation backed away from promises to fund various Idaho motorized recreation programs.

This is factually wrong.

In addition to the economic development provisions provided to adjacent counties, towns, and ranchers, the Idaho delegation has already followed through on promised funding for several motorized recreation programs. These funds are already set aside in the FY 2010 Interior Appropriations bill.

There is \$1.2 million for trail maintenance and improvement in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area, with \$500,000 for non-motorized trail improvements, \$500,000 for motorized trails, and \$200,000 for wheelchair trails. The exact FY 2010 Interior Appropriations bill language follows:

Of the funds appropriated for trail maintenance and improvement in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area, \$500,000 is for trail improvements; \$500,000 is for maintenance of existing motorized trails and areas; and \$200,000 is for the improvement of two existing trails to provide primitive wheelchair access at Murdock Creek and Phyllis Lake.

Additionally, the FY 2010 Interior Appropriations bill provides \$400,000 to provide for the acquisition of the Piva Parcel, on which a bike path from Stanley to Redfish would be constructed.

Previous versions of CIEDRA included authorization provisions for these programs, but the delegation has since learned that such language tends to cause procedural obstacles. Thus, the recently introduced version of CIEDRA doesn't include authorizing language for the motorized programs outlined above, with the sponsors concentrating instead on lining up funding for these programs in the FY 2010 appropriations bills. Appropriations measures control the purse strings for actual programs. With Rep. Simpson the ranking member of the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, the Idaho delegation has successfully allocated this funding.

It's unfortunate that motorized groups opposed to CIEDRA have chosen to misrepresent funding information to scare their memberships and discredit their delegation.

Last, I want to clarify a commonly circulated myth that no motorized vehicles are allowed in wilderness, ever. This is not true. While motorized and mechanized vehicles are not allowed in wilderness for recreational purposes, vehicles are permitted in wilderness for, among other things: emergency purposes such as search and rescue, treatment of fire, insect, and disease, and certain grazing facility maintenance.

Motorized & Mechanized Recreation

Motorized recreationists are one of the four main constituencies consulted by Congressman Simpson when crafting CIEDRA. The proposed wilderness area boundaries in S. 3294 were carefully drawn in a way that minimizes changes to existing motorized recreational access in the Boulder-White Clouds.

Furthermore, CIEDRA brings resolution to the wilderness debate in the Boulder-White Clouds that has lingered since 1972. As we pointed out earlier, there is a combined total of 131,500 acres of public lands in Boulder-White Clouds that are currently managed as de facto wilderness that will no longer be studied for wilderness designation if this legislation is passed by Congress.

The 2003 Sawtooth National Forest Management Plan and the 1987 Challis National Forest Management Plan collectively recommend over 218,000 acres of Forest Service lands for wilderness designation in the Boulder-White Clouds. In order to ensure that key areas, roads and trails remain accessible to motorized vehicles, ***approximately 51,100 acres of this total would not be designated as wilderness*** by S. 3294. Similarly, ***80,500 acres of BLM wilderness study areas will be released*** from further study and opened to multiple use management.

If CIEDRA does not pass Congress, approximately 328,200 acres of Forest Service and BLM land will remain in limbo and continue to be managed as de facto wilderness under wilderness study area provisions contained in existing laws. Unless this legislation passes Congress, the federal land management agencies could close any of the lands or trails under consideration for wilderness if at any point in time these agencies determine that motorized use is undermining their wilderness character.

Snowmobiles

The largest concessions made to motorized recreationists are for winter snowmobile use in the Boulder-White Clouds. Of the 218,000 acre of lands recommend for wilderness designation by the Forest Service, more than 51,000 acres would not be designated as wilderness in order to ensure that snowmobile access may continue in several locations. Existing high elevation snowmobile access would be maintained in the following locations since these areas would not be designated as Wilderness:

- Fourth of July Basin
- Washington Basin
- Champion Lakes
- Warm Springs Meadow
- North Fork Big Wood River

The North Fork Big Wood River was excluded from the Hemingway-Boulders Proposed Wilderness in S. 3294 because of an agreement reached between snowmobilers and backcountry skiers in 2001 that resolved recreational conflicts in the backcountry areas surrounding Sun Valley. ***This legislation honors that agreement.***

Off-Road Vehicles

The proposed Wilderness boundaries in S. 3294 also exclude key motorized trails in the Boulder-White Clouds. In fact, strong and perhaps unprecedented provisions in the legislation ensure that the Germania Creek and Frog Lake Trails will remain open to motorcycles. Title III of the legislation provides legislative guarantees that these trails will remain open to such use:

- ***Germania Creek*** – “The Secretary shall maintain a trail for single track, 2-wheel motorized and mechanized travel between the Hemingway-Boulders Wilderness designated by section 101(a)(1) and the White Clouds Wilderness designated by section 101(a)(2).” (Section 301(a)(1)).
- ***Frog Lake Loop*** – “Neither designation of the White Clouds Wilderness by section 101(a)(2) nor the exclusion of portions of Forest Service trail 047 and 682 (commonly known as the “Frog Lake Loop Trail”) from the wilderness shall affect the management of those trails for motorized or mechanized travel in accordance with existing laws.” (Section 301 (c)(1)).

Not only are the Germania and Frog Lake Trails given special legislative guarantees for the future, but these trails are also located within “cherry stem” wilderness corridors, where dirt bikers will be able to ride with wilderness areas surrounding them on both sides of these trails.

Other roads and trails are also excluded from the proposed wilderness areas in order to maintain motorized and mechanized access in key locations. These roads and trails include:

- Washington Basin Road 197
- Washington Lake Trail 109 to Washington Lake (motorcycles)
- Fourth of July Road 209 to the Phyllis Lake turnoff
- Phyllis Lake Road 053

- Pole Creek Road 197
- Fisher Creek Road 132
- Williams Creek Trails 104 & 332 (motorcycles)
- North Fork of the Big Lost River Road 146
- Casino Lakes Trails 103, 232, 616, & 646 (motorcycles)
- Rough Creek Trails 617 & 647 (motorcycles)
- Railroad Ridge Area Roads 667, 669 & 670
- French Creek Trail 675 (motorcycles)
- Big Lake Creek Trail 678 (motorcycles)
- Germania Creek-Bowery Cutoff Trail 114 (motorcycles)
- Livingston Mill Road 667
- East Fork Road 120 to Bowery Guard Station
- West Pass Creek Road 063 to section 10
- Big Fall Creek Road 168
- Little Fall Creek Road 502
- Park Creek Road 140
- Herd Creek Road to Herd Lake
- Road Creek Road

This list of concessions for motorized recreation paint a pretty clear picture. The vast majority of existing motorized recreational opportunities will remain intact. In the case of Germania Creek, , S. 3294 provides even more certainty that these trails will remain open to motorized access than the Forest Service can assure administratively.

Economic development

CIEDRA, and related appropriations measures, contain several provisions to assist adjacent counties develop a more sustainable economy. Specifically:

- A total of \$6 million would be provided for economic development—including item like community centers and health clinics—through appropriations measures. Some of this money has already been received.
- The bill facilitates economic assistance to ranchers in the East Fork region of the Boulder-White Clouds who have seen allotments reduced in recent years. Under the legislation, the Forest Service and BLM are authorized to accept and permanently retire grazing permits voluntarily donated by ranchers. Arrangements have mean made through a private foundation to provide fair compensations, up to \$3 million.
- The bill authorizes small conveyances of federal lands to Blaine and Custer Counties (and affected towns) for public purposes, including such uses as public parks, cemetery, rod and gun club, waste water transfer station, fire station, and a school bus turnaround.

Disabled access

CIEDRA authorizes creation of the first-ever wheelchair accessible trails in wilderness. The trails would be “primitive access,” which means that they would be compacted, somewhat leveled, and cleared of impassable obstacles like big rocks. These short trails (approximately 1.5 miles) would allow a wheelchair user to navigate them unassisted, as well as provide recreation opportunities for elderly users.

Conclusion

After this long discussion about this bill it’s important to go back to the place.

The White Clouds and Boulders are two stunning mountain ranges and have provided generations jaw-dropping scenery and memories to last a lifetime. To the east, the high tundra slopes of Jerry Peak are commonly home to herds of big game. Throughout this large and diverse area you can find quiet moments surrounded in scenic grandeur that will last with you forever. It is time to provide lasting protection for this Idaho gem.

I have personally been traveling this landscape for decades. I was part of the first group to traverse the White Clouds on skis and have caught fish in the lakes and streams, mended blisters formed on the trails, climbed the peaks, and swum in the lakes. Around campfires and, yes, around congressional hearing tables back here, I’ve been talking about finally getting this area protected for a very long time. And my work merely picked up the mantle of those who worked to protect Castle Peak from a mine those many years ago.

These are national lands, held in trust by the federal government, and while many of us who live in Idaho think of these lands as our own, these are America’s lands. While we are far from the ramparts of Castle Peak today, where we are is totally appropriate, for it is only Congress that can provide the protection this landscape deserves.

This bill is the product of a decade of collaborative discussions and negotiating. This bill is the product of years of bridge building. Having built the bridge, it is time to cross it. It is not the time to allow others to destroy it.

Our support of this bill has drawn painful opposition from the left. The Idaho delegation have been recently been opposed by the right. Our challenge today is to rise above the noise and provide leadership that represents the true majority who sit squarely in the center and want to see collaborative conservation advance in the West. CIEDRA is an example of statesmanship and collaboration at its finest. It’s time the legislation moves forward to enactment.

I’d like to offer my thanks to Sen. Jim Risch on the committee for your support of this bill. Together we have worked on several collaborative conservation projects, such as the Idaho Roadless Rule, with more work ahead. I offer my thanks to Sen. Mike Crapo for his leadership. We, too, have traveled the path of collaboration together, here, and in the Owyhee Canyonlands. I will also say to Senator Crapo that you were a catalyst to me to reconsider the strategic path of conservation in Idaho. I’ve long advanced conservation outside of collaborative processes, but it was your encouragement that helped lead us to this path many years ago.

And while this is a Senate hearing, I must also thank Rep. Mike Simpson. As you long ago said, "if this were easy it would have been done by now." It's been far from easy, and you Congressman, have provided leadership and persistence that truly is worthy of the land that you have worked hard to protect, and equally significant, worthy of the extraordinary people who live around it whom you represent.

Now is the time for Idaho to step forward and demonstrate to the country how we are leading the effort to advance common-sense collaborative solutions to public land management in the American West.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.