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U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS TESTIMONY HR 980 MAY 5, 2009

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Judy Boyle and I am an Idaho State Representative for District 9. I would like to ask that the letter from Idaho's Governor Otter be entered into the committee record which I believe is in your folders. I am here today to speak in opposition to HR 980. Idaho is a beautiful multiple use state containing both federally-designated and natural wilderness. Personally, I have enjoyed recreating in all of our multiple use lands---designated wilderness, roadless, developed, timberlands, sagebrush, grasslands, and national recreation areas. Multiple use is about sharing the land with many uses and users, while being tolerant of all.

I would like to draw your attention to USC 16, sections 528-531, the Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act of 1960, in which Congress declares that "the national forests are established and shall be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes." It also states that "areas of wilderness are consistent with the purpose" of this act. This recognizes that wilderness is considered a use, along with all the other multiple uses, but should not become the exclusive use of the national forest. Of the 24 million acres of national forest in Idaho, 4 million acres are already federally-designation wilderness, 9.3 million acres are roadless, with the remaining for other uses. To most Idahoans, this is a good mix and the very definition of "multiple use." HR 980 would greatly disrupt that balance by forcing half of the US Forest Service lands into wilderness with extremely restrictive use.

Multiple use of federally-managed lands is very important to Idaho. Over 67% of our state is in government hands. In fact, one of the rural counties that HR 980 would negatively affect is Custer County in central eastern Idaho. Custer is 97% under federal management, leaving only 3% as private property. This means the property tax of 3% must pay for 100% of the services, creating a severe hardship on local citizens and local government. Vital search and rescue, law enforcement, and emergency medical services are relied upon by locals and tourists. Over the years, studies have shown that wilderness designations do not improve local economies but in fact harm them. Wilderness tourist dollars are limited and seasonal at best. A strong economy in Idaho means access to natural resource jobs based on active management of multiple use lands. Multiple use management also protects the land and communities from the danger of wildfires. In recent years, Idaho has seen nearly all of the designed wilderness areas greatly harmed by out-of-control wildfires. No road access means fires can only be fought by air or by limited equipment and manpower on the ground with huge risk to firefighters. Fires quickly reach hundreds of thousands of acres, killing our wildlife and destroying their habitat, literally cooking fish and choking streams with ash, mud, and dead trees, sterilizing and sealing the soil preventing seedlings from germinating, adding millions of tons of pollution to the atmosphere, destroying homes and placing humans

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in harm's way. This destruction is the unintended consequence for our beautiful, sacred places which had survived until placed into wilderness designation and a no management policy.

Idaho has a federally-approved plan for the 9.3 million roadless acres developed in a collaborative, local effort led by then-Governor and now US Senator Jim Risch. Governor Risch knew that USC 16 section 530 states "the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to cooperate with state and local government agencies and others in the development and management of the national forests." Governor Risch believed if a plan was to be successful, it should be designed by the people who know the land best--the local citizens, county commissioners, and US Forest Service. He handed this effort to the county commissioners who held many public meetings to determine the highest and best use for those 9.3 million acres. The final Idaho roadless plan is supported by the Idaho Conservation League, Trout Unlimited, Safari Club International, Blue Ribbon Coalition, the state of Idaho, Idaho Association of Counties, USDA Forest Service, and individuals such as Chris Wood, one of the architects of the Clinton roadless rule. In the Idaho plan, 3.3 million acres are more restrictive than the Clinton roadless rule, 5.5 million acres as restrictive, and 400,000 acres less restrictive.

This "bottom up" type of action is how our Founding Fathers envisioned the concept of federalism should work. HR 980 is just the opposite. It is a "top-down" federal mandate with no collaborative process, no involvement of any of the affected states, and no buy-in by the local citizens. Indeed, not a single US Representative or US Senator from one of the affected states is a co-sponsor HR 980. That alone is quite telling. This wilderness proposal tells Idaho, and other states, it is pointless to engage in collaboration with the federal government as it will be trumped. It also renders of no value the federal stimulus dollars which were to be spent on US Forest Service lands for the protection of the land, wildlife habitat, and local communities. For the real protection of the proposed 24 million acres, I respectfully urge you not to pass HR 980. I also invite all of you to visit our beautiful state of Idaho.