

**May 21, 2015**

**Subcommittee on Federal Lands**

**Representative Mike Simpson (ID-02)**

**Written Testimony on H.R. 1138**

I want to thank Chairman McClintock and Ranking Member Tsongas for holding today's hearing on HR 1138 which we refer to as SNRA+. I would also like to thank Senator Risch for his efforts in holding the Senate hearing last month on this bill.

In 2005 we had the first Congressional hearing on the Boulder-White Clouds on what was then the CIEDRA bill. CIEDRA was a complicated 60 page bill that tried to do a lot of things for a lot of people.

Today you have before you a simplified 20 page bill we call SNRA+ that brings management certainty to the Boulder-White Clouds. It does this by making the determination about which parts of the current wilderness study area will, in fact, become wilderness and which parts will be released for multiple use.

There will be three new wilderness areas totaling 275,665 acres:

- Hemingway-Boulders Wilderness (67,998 acres)
- White Clouds Wilderness (90,769 acres)
- In honor of the late Senator Jim McClure we have the James A. McClure-Jerry Peak Wilderness (116,898)

We release wilderness study areas back to multiple use totaling 153,883 acres.

It is important to note we do not close any motorized roads or trails in this bill.

This bill also opens additional loops to mountain bikes.

There have been concerns raised by the mountain bike association that this bill is closing two trails that run through the heart of the wilderness.

The Wilderness Act prohibits the use of mechanized vehicles in wilderness areas. This bill abides by The Wilderness Act.

This bill seems to have become a proxy for a larger debate between mountain bike advocates and wilderness advocates on whether mountain bikes (or mountain bike corridors) should be allowed in wilderness areas. That is a debate that needs to occur in the larger context of The Wilderness Act and not on this legislation.

Ranchers with allotments on the SNRA would be allowed to voluntarily retire their grazing permits and be eligible for compensation from a third party. Any retired grazing permits would be permanently closed.

There is a provision that nothing in the bill affects the jurisdiction of the State of Idaho with respect to the management of fish and wildlife on public land in the State, including the regulation of hunting, fishing, and trapping within the wilderness areas.

Individual parcels of land will be conveyed to Custer and Blaine Counties, and rural communities for public purposes including work force housing, cemeteries, water towers, and waste transfer sites.

As part of this process grants have been provided to the SNRA for trail maintenance and improvements, including maintenance and improvement of existing motorized trails and two existing trails to provide primitive wheelchair access, and for acquiring the land to build a mechanized bike/snowmobile access trail between Redfish Lake and Stanley.

Mr. Chairman, this bill meets the needs of today's users and resolves longstanding debates over the management of the Boulder-White Clouds. It will end the discussion of monuments and wilderness in the Boulder-White Clouds and secures the future for generations of Idahoans who want to continue using and enjoying our beautiful Boulder-White Clouds.

Finally, I am proud of the wide array of support we now have for this bill. We have the support of the Idaho Recreation Council whose members include ATVers, Motorcyclists, Motorized and Non-motorized Boaters, Rafters, Backcountry pilots, RVers, rock hounds, recreational miners and Snowmobilers (the Idaho State Snowmobile Association). We also have the support of the Sawtooth Society, the Custer County Commissioners, East Fork Ranchers, the Idaho Farm Bureau, the Idaho Cattle Association, Idaho Outfitters and Guides, the Idaho Conservation League and the Wilderness Society.

It is a broad array of Idaho user and conservation groups and it demonstrates how far we have come with this bill and how widely it is supported.

This is an Idaho bill- crafted by Idahoans over the past 15 years- to address some of the most contentious land management issues in one of the most beautiful places on earth so that we can both use and enjoy it, and preserve it for future generations. It is by any definition a "compromise" by all stakeholders.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today.