

Statement of Congressman C.L. "Butch" Otter
Committee on Resources Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health
Hearing on Eco-Terrorism and Lawlessness on the National Forests
February 12, 2002

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing today. This is a timely hearing on an issue that for far too long has been overlooked. It is deeply troubling that as our nation battles the evils of terrorism abroad, we also face serious threats at home from so-called eco-terrorists. These troubled individuals chose the despicable tools of violence and terrorism in the name of environmentalism.

I know first-hand the kind of destruction these terrorists perpetrate. Twice during the last year, the Biotechnology Laboratory at the University of Idaho in my district was attacked. On March 5th the University of Idaho biotech building was attacked by ELF who spray-painted the elevators, walls and windows. Again on June 10th the ELF - Night Action Kids cell claimed responsibility for painting the outside of the building with a message: "Go Organic." All told these events caused over \$20,000 damage to the University of Idaho Biotech Building.

In 1992 my district was also under attack from Earth First. Activists arrived in mid-July to protest road building in the Cove and Mallard areas. Fearing damage to road building equipment or tree spiking, the Forest Service responded by marshaling a force of federal law officers. The Nez Perce Forest Service spent more than \$260,000 to protect the public and the resources from this group.

I know of individuals and institutions who have been victims of ELF actions and are reluctant to step forward today and discuss what happened to them for fear of repercussions. This is just not right. No one should have to live in fear of attacks for doing an honest day's work. I appreciate those who have come forward today to testify and help build a record for the committee.

Because of these attacks and concerns, I joined Congressman Nethercutt as a co-sponsor of H.R. 2795 the Agroterrorism Prevention Act of 2001. I look forward to working with the committee as it considers all of the eco-terrorism prevention legislation. It is my hope we can pass meaningful reform that will deter these harmful actions.

Eco-terrorists not only cause millions of dollars in damage to public and private resources, they injure innocent people in the process and pose a serious threat to innovation and scientific discovery. We must not allow this threat to society and to science to go unpunished.

I would like to submit comments from the Federated Women in Timber for the record.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.