

Committee on Resources,

Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation, & Public Lands

[parks](#) - - Rep. Joel Hefley, Chairman

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-6207 - - (202) 226-7736

Witness Statement

**Statement by the Honorable Michael J. Anderson, Mayor
Oak City, Millard County, Utah before the
U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee
on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands
July 19, 2001**

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

My name is Michael J. Anderson. I am the Mayor of Oak City, a town of approximately 850 residents in western Millard County, Utah. I am employed at the Intermountain Power Plant and I am also a Dairyman.

Thank you for holding this hearing. Cricket and grasshopper damage in our area is hitting us hard economically and physically. To quote a statement from one of our citizens, "Mormon crickets in Millard County have not only gotten into our town, but into our houses and into our lives". They are severely impacting our everyday living and our quality of life. In our town our children don't even dare to go outside or sleep in their own rooms for fear of the big, black creatures they see all over their lawns, sidewalks, flowerbeds and gardens. The situation illustrated by the pictures before you and attached to my written statement, brings to mind biblical plagues. Our children and others have been so mentally traumatized by these creatures that they dominate almost everything we try to do. Nearby Forest service campgrounds are no place of refuge either. Campground tables and restrooms are covered with crickets, cricket feces and saliva from the crickets. A recent church girls camp became a miserable experience for 400 local girls due to the crickets. **(Show crickets)**

For the first time, crickets and grasshoppers have become a public health threat. Just like us, many western towns are surrounded by or are adjacent to federal lands. We have had crickets in Forest Service lands in our area for years, but this is the first year they have descended on our town in unbelievable waves, taking every almost living thing in their path, forcing people on the south and east sides of town to burn their shade and fruit trees in an unsuccessful effort to keep the creatures out of their homes and yards. A creek near town should have stopped them, but they just go up the willows until their weight bends them down and they cross over each other and move on into town.

Our town recently finished a drinking water system upgrade with sealed collection boxes in a nearby canyon on Forest Service land. After the upgrade, our Water Superintendent and I inspected the water collection boxes at the spring head. To our amazement we found handfuls of dead and rotting crickets in the water inside the collection boxes. Our townspeople are very concerned. What diseases do these creatures carry? What are our citizens exposed to? This newly discovered public health threat has prompted our Governor to appoint a task force to find out, and to help develop a remedy. Imagine how our citizens feel about the federal government's failure to control crickets on adjacent public lands!

Our water storage tanks have to be vented and we are using the smallest screens possible. There is also a chlorination house. All have been penetrated by the creatures. Unless they can be controlled on the adjacent Forest Service land where their egg-laying and hatching beds are, we have found nothing that can keep these creatures out of these facilities. As I said, our watershed is on Forest Service land. And under current Forest Service policy, there can be no insect control within 500 feet of the springs. Without control on the Forest Service land above that point (which was not done this year) how can we assure the safety and reliability of our water supply when crickets and grasshoppers infest the hillsides and valleys of our watershed ? We really have no alternative to these water sources.

Officials of the U.S. Department of Agriculture APHIS report that several western states are experiencing heavy cricket and grasshopper damage this year, with the heaviest Utah infestation of crickets in at least 60 years. According to the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, with the heavy egg-lay now underway, the prospect looms of an even heavier devastation next year, with these repulsive crickets and grasshoppers laying eggs right in our town. Only a very severe winter would reduce the numbers by killing some of the eggs.

The State of Utah is doing all it can by cost-sharing with private agriculture landowners on bait and aerial spray where it can be legally used but no such assistance has been available within the borders of our town. As we contemplate next year's invasion, with eggs laid right on our doorsteps, we feel like the little Dutch boy holding his finger in the dike while the dike is overflowing. Without control on adjacent public land, it is a losing battle. We are here to appeal to this committee to urge the congress to provide the means for public land agencies to be better neighbors and use the proven, effective methods to control crickets and grasshopper on Forest Service and BLM land.

Thank you for your consideration of our request

Attachments:

1. Photographs of typical cricket infestation in Oak City, Utah
2. Written statement by Mrs. Janet Lindquist, Oak City, Utah resident
3. Written statement by Bruce Lovell, former Oak City Mayor and Millard County Commissioner
4. Witness Disclosure Statement - Michael J. Anderson

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