

Statement of Custer County Commissioner Cliff Hansen
Before the Forests & Forest Health Subcommittee

On H.R. 3603 The Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act

October 27, 2005

My name is Cliff Hansen, I am a rancher and I have lived the last 63 years in the Stanley area. I have seen the bands of sheep and the herds of cattle diminish. Logging as we used to know it is gone. Today our small community of 100 lives on tourism; 2.1 million people come to float our rivers, hike into our high-mountain lakes, or maybe just take pictures of the rugged, majestic mountains called the Sawtooths.

I have been a Custer County Commissioner for 15 years. Our county has 3.1 million acres but only 158,000 acres of that are private, less than 5 percent. Today we have approximately 1,093,000 acres in wilderness between the Frank Church Wilderness and the Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

We are not in favor of any more wilderness. But, with that said, we certainly appreciate what Representative Simpson has done by reaching out to all the agencies and entities.

He has seen the economic needs in our county, he has tried to eliminate trespass issues, and he has worked with the ranchers on their grazing permits. He has spoken with the snowmobilers, the motorcyclists, the mountain-bikers, the outfitters, the Idaho Conservation League, and the Wilderness Society.

Representative Simpson held public hearings across the state. Out of the hearings came the information to put this bill together. We know for a fact that all sides made compromises.

The hard release of 138,000 acres now in wilderness study areas will be put back into multiple-use, which will allow federal agencies to better administer these lands for diversified uses.

The Sawtooth National Recreation Area approximate statistics tell their own story. It is comprised of 756,000 acres of 733,537 are federal lands, 20,322 private ownership and 2,200 acres of state ownership. The federal government has purchased 5,933 acres consisting of 504 parcels of \$21,200,000. That property was removed from the tax rolls.

In closing, I would like to say that Custer County can only provide minimal services to our citizens and visitors because only 5 percent of the land base can be taxed. This is inadequate. We do receive PILT money, but because it is based on population, it is also inadequate to provide the services the public needs.

Appropriated funds would be invested and the accrued interest would be disbursed for economic development and the maintenance and operations of Custer County.

Custer County supports Representative Simpson's H.R. 3603, which is before you today and we would respectfully ask you to support this bill too.