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**Statement of Ranking Member Doc Hastings**  
**Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests & Public Lands**  
**Legislative Hearing on H. R. 980**  
**the "Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act"**  
**May 5, 2009**

Mr. Chairman,

First, I want first to thank the witnesses who are testifying today, particularly the witnesses from the areas most affected by this very far-reaching bill who have travelled across the country to give us their views. And, who, in all likelihood, were not consulted about this legislation.

Let me explain. This bill is unique. There is no pretense of it being a consensus bill that incorporates carefully considered Forest Service or BLM management plans. Nor was it influenced by the moderating accommodations that occur when various legitimate interests – sportsmen, timber workers, state resource agencies, local businesses, private property owners and those whose livelihood depends on access to public lands – seek common ground.

The collaborative public processes designed to ensure that competing demands are considered and weighed in a bill of this magnitude are simply dispensed with in this bill.

Two thousand miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers are designated in this bill. Designated without even being studied for suitability.

Entirely new categories of land use restriction such as biological corridors, whatever that may be, would be enacted into law. These new concepts are not even proposed to be tested in a small, experimental area. This bill covers vast expanses of land – tens of millions of acres. It is the largest proposed wilderness designation outside of the immense wilderness of Alaska.

The premise underlying this bill is, apparently, that wilderness designation is the only way to protect the outdoor environment. I do not share that view.

I do not believe we must lock away the public's lands from public access in order to conserve it.

I have seen too many healthy private forests... too many healthy, actively managed federal and state lands... to hold a wilderness-only view.

I have also seen many wilderness areas plagued by fires, insect damage and the other wounds of neglect.

Wilderness areas are, frankly, not all they are portrayed to be.

Finally, I will say that I am troubled by legislation whose sponsors live far from the communities and districts that they are targeting. Communities and districts that would be subjected to very real economic harm and lost jobs if this bill were to become law.

Not a single one of this bill's 72 sponsors represents a district that would be affected. Clearly this legislation is being pushed by groups that are out of touch with and do not represent the views of those Americans that would be directly affected by this bill.

Thank you. I look forward to the testimony of today's witnesses.