

Carole King's
Written Testimony opposing HR 3603
10.27.05

Chairman Walden, members of the subcommittee, Congressman Simpson: I appreciate you inviting me here to testify today. I'm a 28-year resident of Idaho and a 24-year resident of Custer County. During my career as a singer and songwriter, I've been to almost every state. Of all the beautiful places I've seen, I chose to live in Central Idaho because of the wild majestic mountains where a person could find peace, quiet and solitude. Other places have wilderness, but the Boulder White Cloud Mountains are the largest intact roadless area in the Northern Rockies. As such, they're a natural, renewable resource for Idaho, increasingly valuable because large tracts of wilderness are disappearing everywhere else.

For the past 24 years I've shopped at local stores, driven up and down mountain roads, and I still vote in the nearby town of Clayton with an X on a paper ballot. Idahoans say: "Idaho is what America was." That's certainly true in Custer County. That's why the people who live there love living there. As I've met with many of you over the years, you must know that I come before you today with a long history of caring for the land and the people of my community.

About five years ago, I started working with some of my neighbors on projects that would provide long term jobs while maintaining the quality of life that is so important to everyone. One project is already under way, an observatory in partnership with NASA and Boise State, possible only because of the elevation and the fact that there's no ambient light for miles around due to no development in the Boulder White Clouds. As it says on the information sheet:

"Imagine an Idaho with young adults participating in world-class scientific research—shining and contributing to the field of astrophysics."

Imagine.

Exhibit 1.

With all due respect, it wasn't the County Commissioners who came up with the idea for the observatory. It's happening only because some of my neighbors stretched their imaginations beyond the traditional "wilderness or jobs" paradigm. It's not wilderness or jobs. It's wilderness *and* jobs. And—these jobs are not outsourceable!

Plans are under way for study centers in geology and biology. Challis is a mecca for rockhounds. Why not have a geology center? Why not partner with universities across America in a biology center so students from all over can study biology firsthand and observe the animals and habitat unique to the wild Boulder White Clouds? In addition to tourism, which is a primary source of income in Idaho, the possibilities for long term jobs based on this large, intact wild tract of nationally owned public land are limited only by the imagination (or lack thereof) of our community leaders.

If anyone doubts the importance of a large intact wilderness to my community, please come to Challis or Stanley. As you drive in, you'll see the welcome sign saying: "Welcome to Challis—or Welcome to Stanley. *Gateway to Wilderness.*" (emphasis mine) It does *not* say "Gateway to Off Road Vehicle Trails."

Some economic possibilities could actually be foreclosed by the passage of CIEDRA. Projects like the biology center that depend on the adjacent large intact wilderness need the Boulder White Clouds to remain exactly that: large, wild and intact. The four small wilderness areas surrounded by motorized trails proposed in CIEDRA may be wild, but they're not large or intact or unique, and the price CIEDRA exacts to protect those areas is entirely too high.

While still not officially supporting the bill as of last week, the Idaho Conservation League is nevertheless urging you to support CIEDRA because of the wilderness it designates. They cite a poll that they paid for showing that 65% of people in Idaho support wilderness, and by extension, they claim, CIEDRA.

I'm delighted to have something confirmed that I already knew anecdotally, that a substantial number of people in Idaho love Wilderness, but I believe the ICL poll is misleading in claiming that CIEDRA will give respondents the wilderness they want. I strongly believe the results would be different if they had been asked if they were willing to accept the limited wilderness in CIEDRA in exchange for all that will be lost. Wilderness means different things to different people, and the questions were framed to connect support for wilderness with support for CIEDRA. I urge you to look deeper than this poll in determining whether CIEDRA is the quality of wilderness that people in my state really want.

ICL is one of three groups with interlocking boards of directors that support CIEDRA, who all receive significant funding from

the Pew Charitable Trusts. I speak for the Committee to Save the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA), which comprises 34 independent groups and individuals who oppose CIEDRA. While all the groups believe that wilderness is a good thing, the 34 groups I represent believe that the wilderness in CIEDRA comes at too high a price. It's hard to see this bill as good for wilderness when it will "release" 132,000± acres of Wilderness Study Areas permanently from eligibility for Wilderness designation, ever, while encouraging and locking in motorized trail use in over 550,000 acres of the Boulder White Clouds.

Exhibits 2 and 3

CIEDRA creates special new management areas specifically for the purpose of locking in motorized use as the priority use on these lands. Some of these areas overlay the SNRA, which was established on August 22, 1972, when Congress passed Public Law 92-400 (PL 92-400). Congress's intent in establishing the SNRA was to protect the area's primary values of fish and wildlife resources, natural, scenic, pastoral and historical values, and recreation attributes. Some may see riding motorized vehicles in *de facto* wilderness as recreation, but I see it as an anathema to the preservation of the resource.

Our government has spent \$65 million in the SNRA on conservation easements to protect critical habitat for fish and wildlife from development. By including, as an outright giveaway of public land for trophy home development, a 162± acre parcel next to the town of Stanley that American taxpayers spent \$341,000 protecting, CIEDRA disregards the history and intent of PL 92-400; the reasons behind the passage of that law; and all the money that Americans have invested for over 33 years in protecting the SNRA.

Carl Pence, a former head ranger of the SNRA, will testify to you about how CIEDRA will prevent forest managers from decreasing the amount of motorized use, no matter how degraded the landscape becomes, and no matter how adverse the impact of such use on wildlife, hunting or fishing. The 34 groups and I object to this provision, as well as to the promotion and funding of off road vehicle use in the Boulder White Clouds. At a time when we are being asked to conserve oil, I don't understand why any member of this subcommittee would support a bill that encourages and funds the recreational burning of oil, when people across the northern reach of this nation are shivering in their homes because they can't afford heating oil.

The 34 groups and I also object to the giveaway to Custer County of 6000± acres of nationally owned public land in exchange for the Commissioners' support of CIEDRA. This may benefit a few developers, but it won't help my community. While the gifts of money and public land in CIEDRA may be well intentioned, they're not in keeping with the economic science showing that residential development in rural communities creates a greater tax burden for current residents based on the cost of the increased infrastructure that such development requires. When you factor in the cost of the increased infrastructure over time, the result is a net loss to the community.

Exhibit 4.

The 34 groups and I object to the fact that CIEDRA will permanently remove from consideration 550,000± acres currently eligible for designation as Wilderness, including 132,000± acres of Wilderness Study Areas, all of which would be protected by HR 1204, the Rockies Prosperity Act. I've met many of you in the course of my work to pass HR 1204 over the past 15 years, and I sincerely thank the members of this subcommittee who are cosponsoring it. Rockies Prosperity currently has 185 bipartisan house members in support, including 18 Republicans, of whom 2 are committee chairmen.

CIEDRA has 1 cosponsor.

Rockies Prosperity is based on science. Is there any mention of science in HR 3603? No, because the science is clear that ORV use is harmful to land and wildlife, and by extension, to the economy. ATV use in elk habitat (of which the Boulder White Clouds are prime) destroys summer range. High tech machines that go just about anywhere cause animals to enter winter with lower fat reserves due to degraded habitat quality. Animals lose up to 30% of their body weight during winter. They have to gain it back in summer, and if their habitat is compromised by motorized intrusion, they abort fetuses. Calves entering winter with lower weight are not as likely to survive the winter.

Exhibit 5.

I'm not against ORVs. I ride a snowmobile. I just don't think I need to ride it everywhere. I respect access restrictions, which in this age of Forest Service and BLM budget cuts and heavy lobbying from industry-funded motorized groups, are often not enforced. Even within the motorized community, non-compliance is a well-known problem. When I had a conversation about this with Chairman Pombo, he acknowledged rogue riders as a significant part of the problem. It's not about acreage; it's about compliance.

Exhibit 6, 7, 8

Exhibit 9: <http://www.wildlandscpr.org/orvs/orvresources.htm>

Back to economics: a recent article in Progressive Farmer magazine cited Blaine County as one of the top ten places to live in rural America. Among the deciding factors were health care, education, climate, pollution, crime, tax burden, quality of life, leisure, cultural pursuits, and scenery. Proximity to off road vehicle use was not mentioned as a factor.

Exhibit 10.

The Boulder White Clouds need to remain large, intact and wild. The vast tract of unroaded wild land is what brings the vast majority of people from around the world to spend money in Central Idaho, not off road vehicle use. Forest Service logs show that use in the Boulder White Clouds has historically been 95% non-motorized. If we let CIEDRA chop the greater *de facto* wilderness into four small pieces separated by motorized trails and actually encourage more motorized use on an additional 550,000± acres, visitors and businesses will go elsewhere.

I'd be happy to work with Congressman Simpson on two bills: one that provides meaningful wilderness protection for the Boulder White Clouds, and one that provides meaningful economic benefit to the families of rural Idaho. But I can't support CIEDRA. It's wrong for the land, wrong for the wildlife, and wrong for my community. It will further open the door to every rural community seeking to withdraw land, for whatever reason, held in the public trust for the benefit of *all* Americans. That makes CIEDRA wrong for the country.

As of last week, CIEDRA was still a moving target in terms of acreage and maps. Not everyone was at the table when the bill was drawn up, and a lot of us haven't seen the agencies' comments and concerns. To the best of my knowledge, the Bureau of Land Management has no existing travel plan and no inventory of what routes and roads exist on the ground. I know you want to make an informed decision that's right for Central Idaho and your constituents. In order to do that, I urge you to join me in asking Congressman Simpson for more complete information, and also asking Chairman Pombo for field hearings.

Congressman Simpson invited many of us to testify today knowing that most of us oppose his bill. I know he's trying to be fair, and I appreciate that. But he may use our objections to show you what he's up against and how difficult it is to come up with a consensus in Idaho. He may say that because no one is happy with his bill, it's a true consensus, that CIEDRA is the best bill Idaho will ever get. I respectfully disagree.

The Boulder White Clouds cannot be all things to all people. Like the Hope Diamond and Solomon's baby, the whole will be destroyed if it's chopped up to meet everyone's needs. The Boulder White Clouds need to remain large, wild and fully intact. They need to be protected under the Wilderness Act to provide "outstanding opportunities for solitude."

They say a camel is a horse designed by a committee. So compromise can turn the best and highest use of a thing into a travesty that does harm to everyone. Please join me and the 34 groups and individuals I speak for in rejecting CIEDRA as a well-intentioned but misguided effort. Thank you.