

Statement of the The Honorable C. L. "Butch" Otter

Mr. Chairman, I wish to thank you for inviting Mark Rey here today. President Bush's choice of Mark shows his concern for the needs of western forests and the people who depend on them.

In a previous incarnation Mark served as a staffer for Idaho's senior Senator, my distinguished predecessor in this seat, Larry Craig. Mark follows in the footsteps of the chief forester, Dale Bosworth, who also has an extensive knowledge of Idaho.

I mention that, Mr. Chairman, because Idaho's forests are in crisis. Since the beginning of the Clinton administration more than 30 mills have closed in my state. Thousands of millworkers have lost their jobs, and thousands more in the towns that have lost their largest employers because of mill closures.

The previous administration held our forests and forest users in contempt.

They imposed a roadless rule that cut our mills off from their supplies.

They failed to take steps necessary for fire prevention, and then allowed millions of acres of our forests to go up in smoke.

They failed to prevent the importation of state subsidized Canadian lumber that violates the rules of fair trade.

Fortunately, the Bush administration has taken steps to restore our forest policy to normalcy. I look forward to listening to Mark Rey's testimony.

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