

December 4, 2013

Chairman Denny and Winder and Members of the Federal Lands Subcommittee of the Idaho Legislature:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this issue. I am opposed to further pursuing efforts to turn over federally managed lands in Idaho to the State for a number of reasons. First and foremost is that this effort would be clearly prohibited by the Idaho Constitution, which states in part at Section 19, Article XXI: "And the people of the state of Idaho do agree and declare that we forever disclaim all right and title to the unappropriated public lands lying within the boundaries thereof....That this ordinance shall be irrevocable, without the consent of the United States and the people of the state of Idaho."

There are numerous management issues associated with this proposal, such as funding, providing people trained and able to appropriately manage these lands, and assurances the hunters, anglers, and recreationists will continue to have access. But since I do not believe there is any way the people of Idaho and the United States would agree to turn the lands over, the issue is moot. I recommend the subcommittee put this proposal behind you where it belongs and refocus on the legislature's time and energy, and the people's money, on alternatives to taking ownership of federally managed lands in our great state.

There are several examples of how Idaho and its citizens have been and will continue to work constructively to get desired results in the management of federal lands. The Clearwater initiative, the Owyhee initiative, the Governor's sage grouse management plan, and the Idaho management plan to allow de-listing of the Yellowstone grizzly bear are just a few examples. Idaho would be better served by working cooperatively with federal managers and all affected parties in crafting solutions to the issues that arise.

Fed bashing is a popular sport in Idaho, and I must admit to having participated freely and enthusiastically in my younger days. With time I have come to realize there are more efficient and effective ways to get things done for the good of the people closest to the issues. Let's give up the idea of taking over ownership of federal lands and renew efforts to work with everyone who has a dog in the fight to come up with solutions most people can live with. Thanks again for the opportunity to provide input on your deliberations.

Steven Huffaker