

12/7/2013

Federal Lands Interim Committee
c/o Legislative Services Office
Research and Legislation
PO Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0054

Dear Subcommittee Members,

I would like to take this opportunity to outline the reasons I am **opposed** to the transfer of federal lands that you are tasked with considering. I am a professional forester, private landowner, citizen of the State of Idaho for over 25 years, avid outdoorsman, and tax payer. I also take some measure of pride in having spent my career in the timber industry.

Federal lands in Idaho are owned by all Americans. While some of the State's citizens and elected officials are quick to promote the autonomy of the State, it is unlikely that the current owners of federal land in Idaho are interested in pacifying the demands of a minority of people in Idaho without a prolonged legal battle. In my layman's understanding of the law, the State is poised to spend a tremendous amount of money in court challenges that it is likely to ultimately lose.

Transfer of federal lands to the Idaho Department of Lands would, almost assuredly, result in a net increase in jobs in some rural areas. I need to stress that employment numbers will not return to previous levels. Many of the jobs that disappeared with the reduction in federal timber supply would have disappeared anyway due to mechanization in both harvesting and milling operations. The labor needed to get timber to processing plants has been declining since steam replaced bull teams. Undoubtedly, this trend will continue into the future at an ever quickening pace. Economic and employment figures suggested by advocates of this plan assume "historic harvest levels". The public has shown little tolerance for that level of industrial forestry, which is perhaps the key driver in the current impasse over federal timber harvest.

The economic benefit to the State of the proposed transfer is uncertain. I question whether advocates of this plan have made a full and true accounting of the costs associated with road maintenance alone. If the Forest Service is unable to keep up with road, trail, and campground maintenance, it seems unreasonable to assume that the State will be able to meet these obligations. Indeed, the risk of losing money we do not have is a very real possibility. The State has already shown a willingness to divest itself of endowment lands (i.e. cottage sites). Ultimately, my opposition to the transfer of federal lands to the State boils down to this: I believe the State would use the first "budget crisis", real or imagined, to sell public lands that are currently available to all, to the highest bidder. Public lands are my children's birthright; a legacy inconceivable to people in other countries. The loss of that heritage is absolutely unacceptable to myself and the vast majority of Idahoans.

There are sound economic and environmental arguments for increasing federal timber harvest in some areas. The proposed federal land transfer is not the vehicle to achieve that objective. I

respectfully suggest that the collaborative model currently utilized in the Clearwater Basin is a more effective method for bringing diverse stakeholders to the table- and ultimately building public support for management goals and objectives. Accordingly, I urge you to reject the proposed federal land transfer.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Derrick Reeves", with a stylized, flowing script.

Derrick Reeves

Co-chair, Idaho Chapter
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers