

Good morning; Welcome

I am Skip Brandt; Idaho County Commissioner

And I support the transfer of the federally claimed lands to the State of Idaho, minus the designated Wilderness Areas.

Why do I;

Because the Federal management system is broken. And let me be clear it is not the local on the ground Forest Service folks. It is the system that they are mandated to follow that makes the cost of timber sales more than they can make.

It cost the federal Government more money than they can make with all the costly hoops they are mandated to jump through. (cost \$.06 per harvested acre, State makes \$55.00 per harvested acre)

With that being said; I would like to address several comments that I have heard against this idea transferring the Federal lands.

1. They bring up how much the Fed. Spends to manage these forest:
How can anyone with one ounce of common sense think that the State would spend as much as the Feds do; on any process.
2. They say that the State cannot afford the management of these lands because of fire suppression!:
Really how can you overlook the fact that the State made \$54 M last year. Would it not stand to reason that if the state had 10 times the acres they would not make 10 times the money?
3. And then they follow that up with; If the State had title to the lands they would just sell them off to the highest bidder. First; how could the private sector (highest bidder) afford fire suppression if the State of Idaho could not? Second; what would be the benefit to the State if they have to return 95% of the sale back to the Federal coffers?

Again, when the state fights fires and sells timber it makes a profit. And it provides living wage jobs.

The private sector also makes money on private timber lands. Only the Fed can lose money on timber lands.

NOW continuing on, why do I support the State taking over management of Idaho's timber lands.

When I was growing up right here in the Clearwater basin;

We had one of the richest school districts because of the 25% funds that the schools would receive from the timber cut. And only every once in a while we would have a smoky day were you could not see the mountains around the valley. Now we have those conditions on a regular basis, and to the point that we cancel outdoor activities because of smoke. Because back then we had good land management.

We are losing access to the forest every year.

As the Federal Forest Service appropriations get less and less the local forest Service are going to have less personnel on the ground.

Now what else have we tried;

1. I was one of five County Commissioners in Idaho that initiated the Community Forest Trust Concept, which Congressman Labrador introduced last year in HB 1526
2. I am also a working group member of the Clearwater Basin Collaborative. I am a co-chair of the rural economies sub-committee.

And in fact I just spent the last two days in meetings with several CBC members and Jim Caswell (former FS supervisor here on the Clearwater, and with a former regional FS employee and current FS employees in an attempt to find a way to help the agency do their job.

The problem there is; even though we are sitting down at the table with conservation groups there are still some that object to proper land management.

And aside from some administrative things.

Any big solution. It has to go through Congress. Now days what can get down in Congress?

Can we fix the system? I have my doubts.

The best management is local management.

The locals (Idaho Citizens) need to be able to manage our backyards.

We can do it best!

Thank you for coming to the Clearwater Valley. And thank you for your time.

I would stand for questions.