

St Mary's  
Cheryl

The state of Idaho must manage its land for maintaining revenue for Idaho schools and public buildings both by Constitutional mandate and under the terms of the Act of Statehood. Federal lands are managed for multiple reasons which include timber harvest, multiple types of recreation including hunting, wildlife and watershed protection as well as wilderness protection with public access looming large in the mix. Because of this, the management styles do not and cannot correlate and therefore it is impossible to judge which is the most effective manager. You cannot compare apples and oranges.

Critics of the federal land managers base most of their arguments on money. But they do not realize that the roads and improvements that the federal forest service puts in place, which make timber sales possible, cost money. In fact data suggests that timber sales cost more than they return to the public coffers.

They refuse to count in the cost of fire suppression. They do not count the cost of maintaining campgrounds and trails. In fact it has been estimated that transferring federal land to the state of Idaho could cost our state taxpayers up to \$1.5 billion over 10 years. And it would lose us almost 2500 federal jobs (and who knows how many indirect jobs) thus weakening our tax base.

I grew up in Idaho. My children grew up in Idaho. We were always able to easily go fishing or hunting or hiking. That ability to get "out there" is an integral part of the Idaho experience. It's an integral part of the western experience. It is what makes us unique. If Idaho must by law manage its land for the greatest revenue stream, then when costs escalate the state will be forced to liquidate some or most of its holdings. This will directly impact public access.

Many of our fellow Idahoans base their income directly or indirectly on this access to public lands. Because of mechanization there are fewer and fewer logging jobs but there are more and more jobs in the recreation industries. And access to public lands is one reason we retain those young people we do manage to retain. It is one of the few things we have which attracts new residents to our state. If we lose the public in public lands we will lose our heritage.