

St. Maries

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members.

I am Larry Yergler, chairman of The Shoshone County Board of Commissioners.

Thank you for taking the time to have this hearing and considering this very important question "Should we take back our Federal Lands".

I am here to offer you reasons why you should.

As a county commissioner I am responsible for providing services which care for our children, the sick and poor, roads and public safety now and for the future of the citizens within our borders.

Shoshone County was once one of the richest counties in the State and our schools had unlimited budgets. We now struggle with our budgets, have trouble maintaining our buildings and continue to decline in population. Our young are leaving because we have no job opportunities.

74% of Shoshone County is National Forest and used to produce close to 80 MBF of timber annually. We struggle now to harvest any timber. Access to the forest is locked up, Forest health is deteriorating, and our communities are dying.

The forest service is in the process of revising the current IPNF plan. The County has been working on this plan since 2012. We commented. There was a decision. We objected. Our major objection was the Forest Service did not coordinate with local government under NEPA requirements. On April 29 we had an objection hearing with Deputy FS Chief James Pena. Mr. Pena insisted it would be an open and transparent process. He appeared to listen and at the hearing implied that counties, local government, must be coordinated with.

We received a letter stating he would have his decision in approximately 30 days. He was reassigned about one month ago and replaced by a new reviewing officer, Gregory Smith. As of this date, Shoshone County has not officially received notice of a final decision even though it is posted on their website. My first knowledge of this final decision was from a reporter who phoned wishing to discuss my opinion on the decision. This has not been open and transparent and Mr. Smith indicates federal government supremacy and regional Forester coordination were satisfied and only need further explanation.

While I have not finished reading the complete document, this first ever objection process leaves the perception that the forest service possibly did not like the decision from one officer so they changed to a new reviewing officer to accomplish their decision.

This plan will cause even further harm to Shoshone County economically, greater harm to the forest health and brings forward the wilderness proposals that were strongly objected to by all five northern counties. And most importantly, did not consider the input from local government.

It is time to get out from under the yoke of the Federal Government and let's be leaders. Be Bold and step up to make a difference for the Citizens of Shoshone County, for the citizens of Idaho. Help us be free to determine our own destiny.

Thank you.



Larry Yergler, Chairman
Shoshone County BOCC