

Jerry Scheid's Comments for Federal Land Interim Committee on Oct. 9th

My name is Jerry Scheid. I am a native Idahoan, born and raised in the little town of Jerome, in southern Idaho. I am a retired rancher and have run both sheep and cattle during my career. Over the years I have not only grazed livestock on federal land but hunted, fished, hiked and generally enjoyed these lands. I am here today to oppose the efforts of the Idaho Legislature to transfer 33 million acres of federal land to the state.

First, where does the state expect to find the money to properly manage and care for this land? Idaho seems to find it extremely difficult to fund something as important as education yet our legislature wants to take on an enormous land management obligation that, with one untimely forest fire, could run into the tens of millions of dollars.

Second, the state's constitution requires that we use our lands to obtain maximum return for education. Yet the state land board has repeatedly been taken to court for not awarding leases to the highest bidder. You may recall that the Western Watersheds Project has taken the Land Board to court seven times, and won each time, in order to pay the state double the lease rate being paid by a local rancher. It took the courts to force the state to put the interests of public education over someone's private interest. Unfortunately our state has a sorry record of allowing private economic and political interests to trump the greater good.

Third, you recently passed HCR022 resolution would allow a committee to determine what lands could be sold off to the highest bidder. Once in the hands of private owners, the land would no longer be available for the public to enjoy for hunting, fishing, and general recreation. Equally important, neither wildlife nor streams recognize state boundaries. Here in eastern Idaho with our proximity to Yellowstone, wildlife needs large blocks of land across several states (Idaho, Wyoming and Montana) for habitat and migration routes. They should be managed as an ecosystem, not a political division like state boundaries.

Fourth, I question why is this committee is using \$61,000 tax payer dollars to hire private lawyers to oppose the opinion of our Attorney General who is elected and paid by those same taxpayers. Chairman Denney is quoted as saying "Getting good sound advice is well worth it." I would be more impressed with Mr. Denney's comments it was his personal money paying the bill rather than mine as a taxpayer.

Finally, our federal lands belong to all of the people of the United States, not just the citizens of Idaho.

Thank you. Jerry Scheid, 10701 S 1st E., Idaho Falls, ID