

Committee Members-

My name is Dani Mazzotta and I am the Central Idaho associate for the Idaho Conservation League. ICL is the state's oldest and largest nonprofit conservation organization representing over 25,000 supporters from around the state. I know you have heard testimony from some of my colleagues already but it is my hope to give you some additional perspective on this issue from Central Idaho.

I would hypothesize this effort stems from frustration with management issues, whether it be lack of protections for some lands or the desire to see more active management on our forests. This effort, as proposed, is actually taking steps backwards from addressing these management issues and is moving us even further away from the goal of finding real, on-the-ground resolutions.

The conversation that would be more productive would be- "what could we do to improve the management of federal lands, both from the environmental side and from the local economic side"

The Idaho Conservation League is actively involved with at least seven large collaborative efforts across the state. Through these collaboratives we are working to improve inefficiencies in federal land management, we are creating jobs, and restoring wild habitat and watersheds. However, these collaborative determinations are not helped when there is an effort to take over federal lands happening at the same time.

Let me give you an example- One of the collaborative groups we work with is called the Lemhi Forest Restoration Group. Our group is comprised of local officials, state and federal agency representatives, ranchers, landowners, and environmental groups. Over the last two years our group has worked on a Healthy Forest Restoration Act project called the Upper North Fork Ecosystem Restoration Project. This is an integrated hazardous fuels and forest restoration proposal on approximately 41,000 acres. The collaborative group was involved in the formation of this project as well as the Draft EIS process. The EIS was released last month and did not have a single objection. These are the kinds of efforts this committee should be looking at enhancing rather than undermining by trying to cede lands to the state.

I'd like to conclude today by saying that the proposal to turn over thirty plus million acres of the federal lands to the state is unrealistic from a constitutional, economic, and practical standpoint.

The effort has already been an un-needed cost to Idahoan's. If this continues, the cost to Idaho taxpayers could reach into the billions of dollars and the only way it would pencil out would be to auction off our public lands. Our public lands and our access to these public lands is an asset to Idahoans and all Americans. Rather than spending taxpayer dollars on trying to figure out how to seize public lands, I would encourage you to focus on ways Idahoans can come together with our federal partners and produce real results on the ground.