

MINUTES
SENATE RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, January 24, 2018

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Bair, Vice Chairman Siddoway, Senators Brackett, Heider, Vick, Bayer, Johnson, Stennett, and Jordan

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: None

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Bair** called the meeting of the Senate Resources and Environment Committee (Committee) meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT: **Chairman Bair** stated that Jim Yost appeared before the Committee on Monday, January 22, 2018 regarding his reappointment to the Northwest Power & Conservation Council by the Governor to serve a term commencing January 15, 2018 and expiring January 15, 2021. **Chairman Bair** said a motion was in order.

MOTION: **Vice Chairman Siddoway** moved to send the Gubernatorial appointment of Jim Yost to the Northwest Power & Conservation Council to the floor with recommendation that he be confirmed by the Senate. **Senator Heider** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**. **Senators Stennett** and **Jordan** asked to be recorded as voting nay. Senator Heider will be the floor sponsor.

WELCOME: **Chairman Bair** welcomed the Mayor, a City Councilman and Wade Kaufman, all from Driggs, Idaho. Mr. Kaufman has been invited to speak to the Committee.

PRESENTATION: **Mr. Kaufman**, an Advocate of Multi-Use of Public Lands (AMPL), said he would like to address concerns of individuals in Teton and Bonneville counties, located in Eastern Idaho and bordering Wyoming. **Mr. Kaufman** said he also represents the Idaho Snowmobile Association and Skyline Motor Club, of which he is the President. **Mr. Kaufman** said, most importantly, he is a citizen of Driggs.

Mr. Kaufman stated one issue that he wished to address is the Wyoming Public Lands Initiative (WPLI). It was instigated by the Wyoming County Commissioners Association to have committees formed in each county throughout the state. Since Teton County borders Wyoming, Mr. Kaufman is authorized to sit on a substitute seat on WPLI. There are 22 seats, comprised of representatives from conservation groups and from the community, as well as recreational users of the Palisades. They have been asked by the Wyoming County Commissioners Association to come to a conclusion as to what they would like done with the Wilderness Study Area (WSA).

Mr. Kaufman explained that the Palisades is in both Idaho and Wyoming and comprises roughly 200,000 acres of diverse recreational opportunities. The western boundary of the WSA is the Idaho-Wyoming state line and everything east (Wyoming) in the Palisades is the WSA. The Bridger Teton Wilderness Act was enacted in 1984 and acquired WSA at the same time. A Recommended Wilderness Area (RWA) on the Idaho side was also created.

Conversations have been held with the Commissioners of Teton and Bonneville counties to show their concern for this issue and to receive their input. There are over 43 different WSA's in the State of Wyoming. They provide information to WPLI; WPLI, in turn, provides information to Congress as to what to do with the WSAs.

Mr. Kaufman said of the 22 committees, there are only three individuals that represent summer recreational use, winter recreational use, and equestrian use. The remaining members represent conservation groups, wilderness societies, and other individuals who are promoting the importance of changing the WSA into a wilderness or some other type of use. **Mr. Kaufman** said that whatever happens in Wyoming will have an effect in Idaho. WPLI has power to suggest anything that can be changed into wilderness within their county. It would also include the west slope of the Tetons, which is in Idaho, to change any wilderness lines and/or recommend any changes.

Mr. Kaufman said his purpose is to inform the Committee of the importance of this issue, to respond to questions, and to make clear that what happens in the Palisades is important. Snowmobiling contributes to Idaho's economy with \$9.8 million spent in Bonneville County and \$2 million to Teton County per year. Teton Valley has changed from an agricultural driven area to an economy based on skiing, fishing, hiking, biking, equestrian, and motor recreation. The Palisades is a key element in providing diverse economic stability to the communities in that area.

Mr. Kaufman indicated that Congress has chosen not to act on millions of acres of land designated as WSAs. Despite the national policy, Wilderness Advocates, within and outside of federal land management agencies, have crafted policy that directs that proposed wilderness be managed under the strict prescriptions of the 1964 Wilderness Act. In Idaho, Region 1, which includes the Panhandle and the Nez Perce Clearwater National Forests, have chosen to manage RWAs as wilderness. As a result, we have Congressionally-designated wilderness and administratively-created Wilderness. The policy to manage RWAs as wilderness in Region 4, which includes the Payette, Boise, Salmon-Challis, Sawtooth, Caribou-Targhee National Forests, was discussed. It was not adopted; however, **Mr. Kaufman** said they have great concern that it will be adopted. He asserted that this will adversely impact not only the quality of life for many Idahoans and visitors, but the economic stability of many small rural communities who depend on motorized recreation.

Mr. Kaufman stated that Congresswoman Liz Cheney of Wyoming has introduced a bill, HR 4697, that would eliminate all WSAs in Wyoming. She claims to be a heli-skiing advocate. Heli-skiing has existed in the Palisades since 1974, but when it was designated as WSA, the Congressional delegation allowed existing uses to remain. In 2005, a court ordered heli-skiing activity was reduced to 1984 levels. That business activity was reduced by eighty percent.

Mr. Kaufman provided data relating to the economic impact of snowmobiling in Idaho. He also provided a letter from the Teton County Board of Commissioners to the members of the Advisory Committee for the Teton Wyoming Public Lands Initiative informing them of Teton County's desire for the removal of the Palisades WSA and RWA from consideration as wilderness.

Mr. Kaufman urged the Committee to send a letter to Idaho's Congressional delegation that urges them to sunset the Recommended Wilderness Areas and the Wilderness Study Areas. **Mr. Kaufman** also asked the Committee to send a letter to the Chief of the United States Forest Service, Tony Tooke, that encourages him to direct all national forests to manage Recommended Wilderness Areas according to the current policy.

Chairman Bair thanked Mr. Kaufman for his presentation and said the Committee would take his requests under advisement.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Bair** adjourned the meeting at 2:10 p.m.

Senator Bair
Chair

Juanita Budell
Secretary