

Spoken Testimony of Carole King opposing HR 3603 10.27.05

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Udall, Congressman Simpson and Congresswoman Herseth. I chose to live in Central Idaho 24 years ago because of the wild majestic Boulder White Cloud Mountains, where I found peace and solitude. I shop at local stores, and I still vote with an X on a paper ballot. I have a long history of caring for the land, and the people of my community.

Five years ago, I began working with some of my neighbors to balance long term jobs with quality of life. One project under way since then is an observatory—possible only because there's no ambient light for miles. It wasn't the County Commissioners who came up with the idea. It was my neighbors who thought beyond "wilderness or jobs" to wilderness and jobs. And these jobs are not outsourceable!

Plans are under way for educational centers in geology, biology and other disciplines based on large, intact wilderness. CIEDRA could actually harm some of these projects by reducing the wilderness and encouraging second home development in a county with no dark sky ordinances.

The few conservation groups supporting CIEDRA have their own agenda. I represent 34 independent groups and local individuals who oppose CIEDRA. All of us believe wilderness is a good thing, but the groups I represent believe the wilderness in CIEDRA is weak, and not worth the price. It's like making do with thin hand towels on a cold night when you need a warm blanket.

Idaho Conservation League will likely cite a poll showing 65% of people in Idaho support wilderness, and by extension, CIEDRA. I could have told you that people in Idaho support wilderness, but the claim that CIEDRA gives them what they want is misleading. The results would have been very different if folks had been asked about the tradeoffs.

CIEDRA can't be good for wilderness when it "releases" roughly 300 thousand acres of roadless areas; weakens the protections for the Sawtooth National Recreation Area put in place by Congress more than 30 years ago; and creates new management areas specifically to prioritize and lock in motorized use.

Just last month the President asked us to conserve gasoline. Why would anyone support a bill that encourages and funds the recreational burning of oil while people across the nation are shivering in their homes.

The 34 groups and I object to the giveaway of nationally owned public land. Gifts of money and land may benefit a few developers, but they won't help my county because, as economic studies show, residential development in rural areas creates a greater tax burden and a net loss to the community over time. It's an interesting sociological phenomenon that my conservative Republican County

Commissioners are counting on the Federal government to come through for our county when they haven't even been able to get their full PILT appropriation for the past five years.

I've met many of you in my work on the Rockies Prosperity Act, and I appreciate your cosponsorship if you're a cosponsor. Rockies Prosperity is based on science. Where's the mention of science in CIEDRA? Nowhere, because the science is clear that off road vehicle use spreads noxious weeds; is harmful to land and wildlife; bad for hunting and fishing; and bad for farmers and ranchers who need an unscarred landscape to hold the water until later in the season, when they really need it.

I ride a snowmobile. I don't need to ride it everywhere. I respect restrictions. Not everyone does. Even within the motorized community, non-compliance is a known problem. I had a conversation about this with Chairman Pombo, and even he acknowledged that rogue riders are a significant part of the problem. The cure isn't more acreage; it's compliance.

I'd be happy to work with Congressman Simpson on meaningful wilderness for the Boulder White Clouds and a meaningful economic plan for the families in my county. But CIEDRA is neither.

I appreciate Congressman Simpson inviting me here today as a majority witness. I know he's trying to be fair, and I appreciate that. But he may use our objections to show how difficult it is to reach agreement in Idaho. He may say that because no one's happy, CIEDRA is a true consensus, maybe the best Idaho will ever get. I respectfully disagree.

The Boulder White Clouds are like Solomon's baby. The whole will be destroyed if you chop it up to meet everyone's needs. You give one group an arm, another group a leg, a third group the head... you got no baby. We need to keep this baby whole so it can help Custer County and Blaine County prosper for generations. The signs in Stanley and Challis say "Welcome to Stanley." "Welcome to Challis. Gateway to Wilderness." Not "Gateway to Off Road Vehicle trails."

If you're not ready to reject CIEDRA, then I hope you'll join me in asking Chairman Pombo to schedule field hearings. My neighbors should be heard from directly.

The Boulder White Clouds are one of God's unique creations. Why would you not want to protect it *all*, especially when it's good for the economy?

Say no to CIEDRA. We can do better.