CONSERVATIVE CONSERVATIONISTS:

WATER RIGHTS, WILDERNESS, AND IDAHOAN POLITICAL IDENTITY

by

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DEDICATION

For my parents, for their endless generosity and their faith in human decency. And for Wes, for the technical support, the research help, and the patience of a saint.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kelly M. Orgill, born in Pocatello, Idaho, and raised in the small town of McCammon (Idaho), received her Bachelor's degree in English, History, and Mass Communications from Idaho State University (Pocatello) in 2003. She received her Master of Arts in History at Boise State University in 2009.

ABSTRACT

Idahoans' unique and contradictory history of conservation politics reveals deep tensions between expectations of individual water rights, a shared regard for natural beauty, and a deep-seated fear of government intervention. From its earliest settlers to its Sagebrush Rebels to its modern day miners and lumber crews, Idaho has teemed with those eager to profit from the state's natural resources. The post-war interest in recreation and the environmental movement of the 1970s, however, promoted concern and support for preservation in Idaho. Coupled with the Idahoan obsession with water rights, Idaho environmentalism prompted the conservative Republican state to elect environmentally-minded Democrats Cecil Andrus and Frank Church to multiple terms of service. Idaho environmentalism, which has supported wilderness and wild rivers and has stopped proposed high dams and open-pit mining, hinges on water rights. When preservation of nature aligns with preservation of water rights, Idahoans stand firmly together. When nature conservation imperils water rights, they denounce the former. When conservation comes at the price of logging, mining, or real estate interests Idahoans are led by whomever speaks more eloquently to either their sense of moral obligation, or to their fears.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Bureau of Land Management	BLM
Bonneville Power Administration	BPA
Centers for Disease Control	CDC
Columbia Valley Authority	CVA
Committee for Idaho High Desert	CIHD
Environmental Protection Agency	EPA
International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies	IAFWA
National Marine Fisheries Service	NMFS
National Rifle Association	NRA
Occupational and Safety Health Association	OSHA

CHAPTER ONE – SAGEBRUSH SETTLEMENT

The history of conservation in Idaho reveals that Idahoans possess a genuine regard for nature that, however sincere and powerful, remains overshadowed by the anxiety and resentment generated by tradition and by anti-federalism. Water rights, the thread that links anxiety to tradition, has proven key to Idaho politics, and often to conservation as well. Water, key to life in every corner of the world, has set the tone for Idaho culture and politics throughout every generation. Given the number and prominence of travel guides offering maps and advice on fishing in Idaho, the casual observer might imagine that the state were awash in lakes, streams, and rivers. To some extent, that is true. As scholar and former state senator Karl Brooks points out, "Idaho is the water-cup of the northwest."[1] However, it is a water-cup resting, for the largest part, in high mountain desert. The majority of the state's population lives in the more arid reaches of its southern half. Water springs up from deep beneath the ground, or courses through in a river bound for the Pacific, but it does not stay. It pays a visit and rushes on, leaving the parched ground fit for sagebrush, or for the occasional hardy Siberian Elm, a tree so unloved by horticulturists and home owners that they include them only grudgingly, if at all, in deliberate landscaping. Common sense would dictate that Idaho's

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[1] Karl Brooks, "It Happened in Hells Canyon: How Idahoans Invented Environmental Law," lecture, Idaho History Center, Boise, ID, July 30, 2008.

arid climate, with an average yearly rainfall of only 12.44 inches, leaves the region unsuitable for farming.[2] Even optimistic early settler Charley Greenwood found no better description for southern Idaho than "the country God forgot."[3] As America grew, the poor and entrepreneurial, guided by equal parts of optimism and desperation, tried their luck against desert practicality. Early settlers survived only through endless labor at building and maintaining canals, irrigating seemingly endless dry acres, and defending their water rights, sometimes literally, to the death.

In the early days of settlement, the Bureau of Reclamation lured newcomers to the arid state with tales of mythic proportion about the abundance to be had in Idaho. The state's 1920s poet laureate, Irene Welch Grissom, titled one piece "Desert Reclaimed," in which rewards "rich and rare" awaited settlers. Another author's poem embroidered the truth further: "'Tis the man with the shovel who turns the streams, from its mountain source to a paradise dream, where the orchard bloom perfumes the air, where plenty and beauty are everywhere."[4] Charley Greenwood's wife, Annie, offered a different opinion: "the only plenty we had was mortgages."[5] Annie Pike Greenwood's book, *We Sagebrush Folks,* chronicled a much grimmer account of Idaho irrigated farming than the one offered by the Bureau of Reclamation. The Greenwoods and their fellow settlers fought drought conditions, parched soil, rodents, weeds, and one another; they guarded water

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[2] "General Climate," Idaho Digital Atlas, (Pocatello: Idaho State University), http://imnh.isu.edu/digitalatlas/clima/general/genfr.htm. (Accessed 12/5/2008).
[3] Annie Pike Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks* (Moscow: The University of Idaho Press, 1988), 13.
[4] Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 143, 145, 183.
[5] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 161.

rights with a dedication that, to contemporary observers, looks a great deal like paranoia. A century ago, too little water meant ruin, the loss of dreams and livelihood. A century ago Idaho's environment offered not the outdoorsman's cornucopia of today, nor even the farming paradise praised in poems. A century ago, Idaho farmers survived through arduous labor, luck, and the endless maintenance of equally endless irrigation canals.

In *We Sagebrush Folks,* Greenwood wrote of the struggles and failures of her family's Hazelton farm in the early 1900s. While Greenwood herself, educated and from an urban Salt Lake City family, did not represent the average Idaho settler, her experience did: one of hardship, of futile ambitions, and eventual loss of the family holdings. Published first in 1934, her book provides a first-hand look at Idaho's settlers, of the foundation for the state that scholar Jo Ann Ruckman called "America's least known and certainly least understood."[6] Ruckman, who wrote the forward for the most recent edition of *We Sagebrush Folks* identified a common problem for scholars, newcomers, and even natives of the state; understanding Idahoan prejudices, fears, and goals can prove difficult, from any perspective.

The settlement of Idaho, like the settlement of every other corner of America, began with the straightforward plan of making profitable use of available resources. The nation's founding and progress owed much to what Patricia Limerick identified as "the passion for profit." It was a passion Limerick described in her work *The Legacy of Conquest* that could "make other concerns insignificant and inspire at once extraordinary

[6] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* xviii.

courage and extraordinary cruelty."[7] That passion coincided handily with the Puritan work ethic that scorned idle pleasures and relished the wholesome opportunity to work hard. Profit-mongering, if thought at all wrong, could fit comfortably behind the righteous mask that disapproved of idle hands. Pilgrim Robert Cushman summed up the attitude neatly in his ethnocentric assessment of the Algonquin Indians while also justifying the appropriation of Algonquin lands: "They are not industrious, neither have [they] art, science, skill or faculty to use either the land or the commodities of it… so it is lawful now to take a land which none useth, and make use of it."[8] Cushman's statement revealed not only an unfair assumption about Native American culture, it also displayed the 17th century Colonial bias that put Caucasian benefit before all else. While that bias persisted into the era of Western settlement, the West lay far from the shores that welcomed the pilgrims. No amount of art, science, skill or faculty to use the land brought Idaho's environment to heel. As if by design, Idaho's climate and geography made life, travel, and farming difficult. No amount of labor secured the bounty the Bureau of Reclamation promised, and no amount of irrigation ditch could transform the high mountain desert into a boundless garden, Edenic or otherwise.

People tried, nevertheless, to mold the frontier into the paradise they imagined. From secular settlers to Mormon pioneers, from railroad gangs to miner forty-niners, whether conquering, cultivating, taming, tilling, profiting or pillaging, people brought

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[7] Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987), 77.

[8] Robert Cushman, "Reasons and Considerations Touching the Lawfulness of Removing Out of England into Parts of America," in *The Puritans in America: A Narrative Anthology,* ed. Alan Heimert and Andrew Delbanco, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 44.

their great expectations along with their tools, handcarts, and various beasts of burden. Greenwood's farming experience, not all sufferings and failure, lauded the "lovely, flowing acres of green where only sage had been before we came!"[9]

Indeed, those striving to farm Idaho's Snake River plain, described wryly by scholar Mark Fiege as "the agents of God's great plan for the earth" had, by 1920, irrigated two million acres.[10] Fiege's work, *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West,* explores the settlement of the arid Western states and the problems encountered by those who first attempted irrigated farming in the Pacific Northwest. He explores the programs, brochures, and policies that encouraged Western settlement, as well as the experiences of those who braved the desert. *Irrigated Eden* incorporates folk song lyrics, poetry, journal entries, artwork, and reports from officials to create a balanced look at the cultural and environmental impact of settlement. Fiege makes the point that Western settlement did not only alter the landscape, but that the landscape altered the people who settled it. Where contemporary focus tends to lean to the environmental-impact side of history, Fiege makes clear that desert farming sculpted rural communities, in large part by making cooperation necessary for survival. He treats the environment as an active participant, not static backdrop, telling how settlers "had stolen from nature only to find that nature stole back."[11]

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[9] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 240.
[10] Fiege, *Irrigated Eden,* 2, 4.
[11] Ibid., 24, 207.

By the mid-19th century, the greater portion of the United States opened for settlement, encouraging settlers and speculators westward. Those unlucky farmers who exhausted their Midwest land could pick up again and move even farther west while mining and logging outfits could, for a nominal fee, exploit one region and move on to the next.[12] After the choicest lands had been used up, the desert waited to be not *claimed,* but *reclaimed,* as though nature itself had somehow robbed Americans of the heretofore unexploited land. When farmers failed, American and European entrepreneurs swept in to transform the abandoned acreage into profitable mining, timber, or real estate concerns.[13] In the early days of settlement, with few urban centers, Idahoans relied on environment-dependent income. Made a territory after the discovery of gold in the 1860s, Idaho became a destination for prospectors hoping to find their fortune. Silver, more than gold, rewarded early miners, but in time Idaho's mining industry would branch out to include copper, garnets, molybdenum, tungsten, phosphate, and other minerals. Settlers en route to the greener pastures of Oregon found little of value in the arid Snake River plain. Though its volcanic soil had potential, the abysmally low rainfall did little to entice Oregon Trail pioneers. Prospectors stayed, but farmers went on until two factors took hold that would change the course of Idaho history.

The creation and spread of the Church of Latter-Day Saints (popularly called Mormonism), began in Fayette, New York, but eventually had a powerful impact on the

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[12] Wendy Butler, "The Public Lands: A Brief History," in *Outdoor America,* p. 12. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 10, Folder 9.
[13] Peter Wild, *Pioneer Conservationists of Western America* (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1979), 21.

far-away West, especially Idaho and neighboring Utah. Joseph Smith, after establishing the LDS faith and garnering followers, found himself the target of intense persecution. To preserve his life and his fledgling church, Smith moved progressively westward in search of a place where Mormons could live and worship in peace. Gypsy-like, Mormons established communities in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, mistreated routinely by citizenry and officials alike. Following Smith's death in 1844, Mormons went in search of land so undesirable no one would begrudge them their settlement of it. They also sought physical distance from the reach of elected officials, such as Missouri governor Lilburn Boggs who ordered the deaths of all Mormons in the state.[14] Subsequent Mormon leadership, provided by Smith's successor Brigham Young, reflected the resentment Mormons harbored for their sufferings. Young preached anti-government views to his followers, providing a foundation for the anti-federal attitudes that would flourish in subsequent generations.[15] Their hardships fostered a resentment among the Latter-Day Saints toward government and a wariness for non-Mormons that they carried with them into Utah's Salt Lake Valley. The second half of the 19th century saw a steady influx of Mormons into what scholar D. W. Meinig calls Mormonland (the

[14] Ryan Hart, "The Mormons in Nauvoo," Illinois Periodicals Online (Northern Illinois University Library, DeKalb, IL, 2000), http://www.lib.niu.edu/2000/ihy001211.html. (Accessed 2/15/2009).
[15] James Aho, *The Politics of Righteousness: Idaho Christian Patriotism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 122.

Mormon-dense Wasatch region) extending through most of Utah and reaching up into southern Idaho.[16]

The second major factor drawing settlers into Idaho was the Carey Act. Established in 1894, the Carey Act supported Western settlement and, indirectly, supported the growth of Mormon communities. Two-thirds of all Carey Act claims took place in Idaho, where Mormon pioneers spilled over Utah's northern border. LDS culture, which emphasized cooperation and obedience to church authority, proved particularly conducive to successful irrigation projects.[17] While Mormon culture might thrive in the desert, settlement overall, and the Carey Act in particular, did not fare as well. The Act granted Western states each a million acres to sell to farmers, with the proceeds going to the federal treasury. Prospective farmers paid fifty cents an acre (with a purchasing limit of sixty acres) and took responsibility for funding their own waterworks. In its first eight years, only four of the ten eligible states applied for federal land. The Carey Act, in the eyes of scholar Donald Worster, "was a dismal and discouraging failure," followed by a similar act eight years later: the Newlands Reclamation Act.[18] With policies that refined the Carey Act, the Newlands Act called for land plots of 160 acres at the railroad's insistence. Union Pacific leaders felt that anything less would not appeal to prospective settlers, though smaller plots (as small as forty acres) could be obtained if the farmer so desired. The Newlands Act did impose

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[16] D.W. Meinig, "The Mormon Culture Region: Strategies and Patterns in the Geography of the American West, 1847-1964," in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* Vol. 55, No. 2 (June 1965): 215.
[17] Tim Palmer, *The Snake River: Window to the West,* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1991), 54.
[18] Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire,* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 157.

some restrictions on settlers: water rights could not exceed what 160 acres required, and the land owner had to reside on the acreage (not rent it out to another party).[19] While Mormons saw future homes and prosperity in the West, Union Pacific saw enormous potential for railroad income. More settlers in the West meant more demand for goods and services that the railroad could provide. Better rail services and Mormon willingness to inhabit poor farming country made irrigated farming inevitable but not inevitably successful.

Worster's 1985 work, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West,* examines the social, economic, and political ramifications of Western settlement. He uses California as his chief example, but many of his findings apply to irrigated farming in a broad sense, and he includes information on agricultural trends at the national level. Although Idaho itself gets little mention in *Rivers of Empire* the work includes the policies and decisions that affected the entire West. Worster includes reactions and recommendations of irrigation specialists, compares works by other scholars to put American irrigation in a worldwide context, and explains how irrigating the West impoverished settlers and proved counterproductive to the goal of furthering democracy in America. Additionally, Worster identifies the cost of reclamation and concludes that the cost of enriching a small percentage of wealthy land-holders did not justify the price in tax dollars, environmental damage, and the quasi-enslavement of

[19] Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, 161.

many lower-class, rural people. He examines, too, the role of religion in Western settlement, as well as the unique part played by then relatively-new LDS faith.

Newly converted Mormons sought refuge in the desert and many settled in Idaho. Only Utah could boast a higher concentration of LDS citizens than southeastern Idaho. As authors James Weatherby and Randy Stapilus describe it: "Most eastern Idaho communities were founded by Mormon farmers who swiftly brought their Utah irrigation skills to bear."[20] Though their resourcefulness and cooperation provided Western farmers livelihoods in the desert, not everyone supported reclamation. America's eastern farmers protested reclamation, stating that within a generation overproduction had cut their land values in half. In their view, reclamation pitted them not only against each other, but against government-subsidized Western famers. Others protested on the grounds of principle, feeling that the sale of public lands benefited the railroad and a few private interests instead of benefitting all Americans, as they felt the sale of public property should. Idaho Congressman Thomas Glenn refuted the naysayers, for "it is right for the Government to create and improve everything that will facilitate the creation of wealth."[21] In a truth visible only from hindsight's generous perspective, reclamation did less to create wealth than to concentrate it. As Worster surmised in *Rivers of Empire*,

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[20] James B. Weatherby and Randy Stapilus, *Governing Idaho: Politics, People and Power* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Press, 2005), 23.
[21] Worster, *Rivers of Empire,* 163-165.

"the irrigation centralizers, whatever region they represented, were overwhelmingly an elite group promoting an elite program." [22]

While the LDS started out far from elite, resettlement and reclamation afforded them a great deal of influence in Utah and southern Idaho, and even moderate influence throughout the rest of the Western states. Scholar Thomas Alexander found that while initially settlers in the Wasatch area benefitted from living upon "the Lord's land" (as their religion deemed it, which they had purchased at low prices) they soon found it profitable to sell the Lord's land (at inflated prices) to latecomers.[23] Worster, who included Mormon settlement in *Rivers of Empire,* discovered that the success of first-generation settlers encouraged more settlement and church tithes funded church irrigation projects that provided a higher measure of success to LDS irrigators than their non-Mormon neighbors. The practice not only excluded non-members but strengthened the regional role of the LDS church as well as its influence over its followers. The church, through the power of irrigation rights, swayed elections, determined voter eligibility, and controlled not only water but prime farmland. In Utah, the 1880 territorial Supreme Court considered irrigation districts "engines of oppression." That same year, the state changed its water laws to allow for private ownership of water rights. Joint ownership

[22] Worster, *Rivers of Empire,* 169.
[23] Thomas G. Alexander, "Stewardship and Enterprise: The LDS Church and the Wasatch Oasis Environment 1847-1930 Toward a Twentieth," in *The Western Historical Quarterly,* Vol. 25, No. 3 (1994): 353.

had meant to establish equity, but LDS water districts had turned policy in their favor to such extent that private ownership proved the only way to guarantee fair distribution.[24]

The hardships of life in an arid region, combined with the unrelenting reliance upon church leadership, solidified the role of faith in bringing farmers to the high mountain desert. Manifest destiny, combined with the half-truths pedaled by the Bureau of Reclamation resulted in farming communities blinded by their divine right to exploit natural resources in the names of God and progress. A sign that proclaimed, "Desert Ranch: Have Faith in God and U.S. Reclamation," welcomed newcomers to the Caldwell area.[25] Ironically, despite the persisting myths about Western independence and freedom, Worster has identified the American West as "a land of authority and restraint, of class and exploitation, and ultimately of imperial power."[26] The LDS church, which began as a clutch of ragged refugees, became elite in part through sheer determination and in part through the power granted by their control of regional irrigation.

The social imbalance of reclamation remains heartbreaking to consider. History, until recently, has not showcased the sad realities of settlement. As Limerick identified "the reality of conquest dissolved into stereotypes of noble savages and noble pioneers struggling quaintly in the wilderness."[27] The reality, experienced by the Greenwoods, their Hazelton neighbors, and thousands of other farming families, was anything but

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[24] Worster, *Rivers of Empire,* 79, 82.
[25] Cecil Andrus and Joel Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style* (Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 1998), 125.
[26] Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, 4.
[27] Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest,* 19.

quaint. Reclamation had promised to relieve the urban burdens of poor, to grant lower classes the chance to homestead, to thwart the evil of land monopoly, and to fulfill the divine plan of making the desert fruitful. Instead, the relocated poor grew poorer still. Desperate straits drove them to desperate, brutal behavior. Far from a Biblical paradise, Idaho became a place where water theft led to murder, as in the 1919 case where William Grover killed his neighbor Joe Koury with a shovel. The men disputed over who had the right to alter the course of their shared stream, a matter that went beyond mere theft to the threat of economic failure. Fiege, in his 1999 work *Irrigated Eden,* commented on the irony that Koury, a WWI veteran, had "survived… the horrors of trench warfare only to meet his fate in an Idaho irrigation canal."[28]

The incalculable social cost was measured in wasted effort, lost lives, and immeasurable human misery. Reclamation enriched speculators and established land owners, not ordinary farming folk.[29] The desert soil, while it did become sporadically fruitful also eroded, and became salinated and contaminated. The monetary cost of irrigation proved staggering. The engineering of federal irrigation programs increased from thirty dollars an acre in to 125 dollars in 1925. Payette-Boise area settlers, told they would pay twenty-five dollars an acre, filed suit against the Reclamation Service when the actual cost was eighty dollars.[30] Besides the locale-rooted problems of farming the desert, market competition worsened the chances for small-scale Western farmers. While Californian farmers might produce something unique (oranges, for example), most Carey

[28] Fiege, *Irrigated Eden,* 82-83.
[29] Worster, *Rivers of Empire,* 171-172.
[30] Ibid., 176.

Land Act homesteads produced things that could be grown far cheaply elsewhere. Even in a good year, such as 1917, farmers in Illinois' corn belt averaged an income of $870 while farmers in the Salt Lake Valley earned less than half that much: $417. Many Idaho farmers working erstwhile federal land paid far higher prices for water than those in Northern Utah; many earned less than $417. Commodity prices fell after World War I, plunging already-struggling farmers into deeper debt, financial delinquency, and ruin. For irrigation project farms, crop value fell from 153 million in 1919 to eighty-four million by 1922.[31] The Dustbowl, too, compounded the problem of Idaho poor and the burden upon the Snake River system. Dustbowl refugees travelled West, many settling in Idaho when their scant resources would take them no further.[32]

The distribution and manipulation of water, so central to Idaho life, played a role even in Idaho's fiction. Early resident Mary Hallock Foote wrote several novels centered in Idaho, and her first book, *Led Horse Claim,* painted an unlovely picture of the region. In that tale, the area's effect upon the main character was such that the "long isolation from gentle communications had corrupted his good manners, and the thief of discouragement had stolen his pride."[33] While Foote explored some of her own emotional reactions to the region, her fiction also addressed some of the ecological ramifications of settlement. In *The Chosen Valley* the main character raised a telling question: "Isn't there land enough, with water belonging to it, without spending millions

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[31] Worster, *Rivers of Empire,* 178-179.
[32] Merle Wells and Arthur A. Hart, *Idaho: Gem of the Mountains* (Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications Inc., 1985), 130.
[33] James H. Maguire, *Mary Hallock Foote* (Caldwell, ID: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1972), 17-18.

to twist the rivers out of their courses?"[34] While Foote's character posed a somewhat rhetorical question, the answer supplied by Union Pacific, the Bureau of Reclamation and countless hopeful settlers resounded: apparently not. Indeed, detailed in *Rivers of Empire,* the federal government spent millions. In 1902 the Bureau of Reclamation offered assurances that its endeavors would prove self-sustaining, that it would never request regular appropriations from the government. By the 1930s, with farmers unable to make payments on their costly irrigation projects, the Bureau turned to the government for the help it had promised it would not need. In 1936, the Bureau received sixteen million dollars, then 118 million in 1949, and then, a year later, 314 million. All the while the Bureau did little to enforce laws concerning water use, and provided public power subsidies and interest-free loans to further reclamation of private land. Though taxpayers might have expected, at the very least, adherence to water-usage regulations and a restriction of government assistance to federal projects, they received not even that.[35] Americans, including the eastern farmers whose own livelihoods suffered because of Western expansion, paid for the faulty assumptions, shattered policies, and broken promises of the Bureau of Reclamation. By the 1980s the American West had proven itself the greatest hydraulic society ever created, but according to two economists' calculations, that success had driven between five to eighteen million eastern American acres out of production.[36] The measure of such greatness did not factor in price paid in social liberties, or of people relegated to the equivalent of share-cropping. The measure

[34] Worster, *Rivers of Empire,* 145.
[35] Ibid., 238-241, 243.
[36] Ibid., 276, 278.

of such greatness did not consider if winning the West cost America too dearly in its dream of democracy.

Settling the West also cost the environment greatly. Despite the relative newness of the environmental movement, American wilderness preservation has roots that reach back into the 19th century. In 1864 the federal granting of Yosemite to the state of California as a park "for public use, resort and recreation" reflected that some parts of nature held intrinsic value. While that event did set a governmental precedence for preservation it did little to endear anyone to Idaho's high mountain desert.[37] By the early 1900s, eastern America had developed enough to allow for an interest in wilderness preservation. City life, such a contrast to rural labors, made natural settings a place for recreation and spiritual rejuvenation. In 1901 John Muir felt inclined to "climb the mountains and get their good tidings" but Idaho settlers could not afford such leisure.[38] The difficulty of carving a farm out of such barrenness made it difficult for early Idahoans to value the environment from a preservation standpoint. The West's tradition of reliance upon agriculture would preempt consideration for nature even when conservation efforts found mainstream acceptance. In time, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would estimate that reservoirs cost 50,000 acres of riparian habitat and 1,000 miles of Snake River shoreline, but only after Idahoans had grown accustomed to yielding to irrigators.[39] Awe for the godly work of transforming the desert into a garden,

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[37] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 106.
[38] John Muir, *Our National Parks* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1901), 56.
[39] Palmer, *The Snake River,* 67.

even a parched and sparse one, and respect for the genuine hard work it took placed irrigators beyond reproach.

Of course, early Idahoans, like all early Americans, spared little concern for the impact of their activities upon the landscape. American attitudes toward nature at the end of the 19th century reflected an understandable fear and even dislike for untamed wilderness. Traveling from Europe, where civilization had long since hemmed in tracts of forest, Alexis de Tocqueville discovered that Americans did not enjoy their seemingly boundless frontier. Though Europeans found wilderness novel, even enjoyable, Americans saw dense forests and arid plains as arenas where they battled for their very lives.[40] Undeveloped nature, in America's 18th and 19th centuries, represented struggle and hardship. Indeed, it makes sense that pilgrim William Bradford wrote that the colonists had ventured into a "hideous and desolate wilderness."[41] Those who settled the West carried with them not only their worldly goods and their hopes, but the fears and prejudices that pitted Americans against that foe: nature. The further west settlers went, the wilder wilderness seemed and their struggles did not foster warm feelings for the ever-harsher landscape. Nevertheless, westward expansion, fueled by hopes and promises, supported by the faulty science that assured rain would follow the plow and, if

[40] Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 23.
[41] Ibid., 23-24.

not that, that irrigation would conquer all, all but exploded with the Reclamation Act of 1902. Between 1900 and 1910, Idaho's rural population leapt from 151,769 to 255,696.[42]

In his noteworthy work *Wilderness and the American Mind,* scholar Roderick Nash explored how Western settlement pushed the poor and the ambitious farther from the comforts of civilization. Eastern Americans, particularly those with the free time and education to develop their sensibilities, began to see America's shrinking wilderness as something other than an adversary. Education, coupled with the fact that dwindling wild places gave nature a higher value, led to literature that either depicted nature in positive terms or called, outright, for its preservation. Literate circles embraced outdoor adventuring as a healthy diversion for those living in the confines of urban areas; Thomas Jefferson, DeWitt Clinton, and Washington Irving spoke in glowing terms of America's scenic beauty.[43] Indeed, Jefferson looked upon the Allegheny Mountains and claimed "this scene is worth a voyage across the Atlantic."[44] If only for the sheer magnitude of its open spaces, America had something which Europe did not and that once endless-seeming wilderness grew more dear as it began to dwindle.[45] Early writers incorporated America's wilderness into their writing, from James Fennimore Cooper's novels to Henry David Thoreau's personal accounts. On the printed page, at least, wilderness existed not as a shadowy specter but as a place of beauty and even divine mystery. Thoreau

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[42] U.S. Census Bureau, "Urban and Rural Population 1900-1990," (Washington, D.C., Oct. 1995), http://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/files/urpop0090.txt. (Accessed 10/4/08).
[43] Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* 57, 70.
[44] Ibid., 67-68.
[45] Ibid., 72.

championed the preservation of wilderness "for modesty and reverence's sake, or if only to suggest that earth has higher uses than we put her to."[46]

The eastern view of nature, by the latter half of the 1800s, changed dramatically from those initial dire assessments. An Albany lawyer, Samuel H. Hammond, expressed heartfelt disapproval at the exploitation of nature: "you have spoiled with your worldliness, your greed for progress, your thirst for gain… a glorious dream, as if everything in the heavens, on the earth, or in the water were to be measured by the dollar and cent standard."[47] The idea took hold that forests and mountains offered healthsome adventure and spiritual reflection, that old-fashioned morals, ripe for discovery, awaited far from the confines of the city. Thus, Nash wrote, "appreciation of wilderness began in the cities."[48] Theodore Roosevelt supported preservation through his signing of the Antiquities Act and through his love of the outdoors. His disdain for "the short-sighted men who in their greed and selfishness will, if permitted, rob our country of half its charm by their reckless extermination of all useful beautiful and wild things" reflected a growing concern echoed by more and more easterners.[49] Support for nature often took a somber or critical tone, as when bird-watching enthusiast John James Audubon lamented,

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[46] Henry David Thoreau and William L. Howarth, *Walking with Thoreau: A Literary Guide to the Mountains of New England* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 195.
[47] S. H. Hammond, *Wild Northern Scenes* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 14.
[48] Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* 44, 76.
[49] Theodore Roosevelt, *A Book-Lover's Holiday in the Open* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 299.

"the greedy mills told the sad tale, that in a century the noble forests… should exist no more."[50]

While nature-loving writers spoke with articulation and accuracy about the plight of America's wildlife and wild lands, their eloquence did not impress Western pioneers whose chief concerns centered on survival. People who scratched out a living on failing farms cared little for idealistic notions they might read about, if they could read at all. The fabric of Western life had not incorporated higher education, leisure time to read, bird-watching or other forms of recreation into the weave. A different group of writers penned descriptions about the agricultural potential of Western land, a group who proved far less punctilious about such details as accuracy. Earliest of the new American settlers and explorers had gladly labeled the high mountain deserts of the American West as precisely that: desert. Then, interested parties such as the Union Pacific Railroad and the Bureau of Reclamation realized that if they wanted to see the West settled, the word *desert* could discourage newcomers. Promoters of settlement banned the word 'desert' from maps, decrying that single word of truth as "libel and bad publicity."[51] In an age without a local research library, without a Better Business Bureau, without an internet, without telephones in common enough usage to make cross-continental conversation practical, settlers had nowhere to take their questions. Their own government created an agency that promised them success and better lives out West, leaving no doubt as to the

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[50] John James Audubon, *Delineations of American Scenery and Character* (New York: G.A. Baker & Co, 1926), 9.
[51] Worster, *Rivers of Empire,* 69.

wisdom of their decisions. In a new nation, full of hope and promise, common citizens did not suspect their government of leading them into failure and poverty.

Perhaps they should have. Though, in the government's defense, Worster reminds that "irrigation had become a veritable crusade, urged on moral, patriotic, religious, economic, and scientific grounds." Armed with an entry-level understanding of climatic forces, common knowledge labeled rainfall an unreliable source of water for agriculture and deemed irrigation, the man-made miracle that subdued nature to mankind's will, a safe bet, a sure bet.[52] Some experts, including George Perkins Marsh, American ambassador to Italy who took an interest in Italian irrigation practices, believed otherwise, as Worster detailed in *Rivers of Empire*. Worster also referenced William H. Emory, a topographical engineer from Maryland, who travelled to California to study the agricultural practices of both the Native American and Mexican cultures. Both men considered Western American irrigation a danger to the nation's liberty, their findings thus surmised by Worster: "In attempting to introduce agriculture into that region there was a danger that the individual would become subordinated to a rigid social structure, that hierarchy would replace equality, and that only the wealthy would succeed." That statement, dire enough, echoes the warning offered by John Wesley Powell. In his work with the U.S. Geological Survey, Powell advised the 1893 Second International Irrigation Congress to reconsider irrigating the unsettled West. He told them that the West did not have water enough for one-third of the land already in private ownership, and that even

[52] Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, 114-115.

under optimum circumstances irrigation could bring water to only twelve percent of the West. In short, he told them, "you gentlemen are piling up a heritage of conflict and litigation over water rights for there is not sufficient water to supply the land."[53] Unfortunately for the environment and the multitudes who settled the West, Powell's warning went unheeded. The standard farm plots of 160 acres proved what author Peter Wild called "an absurdity in most of the West, where a hundred acres or more might be necessary to support a single cow."[54] Scholarly reference certainly finds it an absurdity, but for generations living well below the poverty level, it meant nothing short of genuine tragedy.

Irrigate all they might, Idaho's hopeful new citizens discovered that the myth spun by the U.S. Reclamation Service was indeed just a myth.[55] Though America's frontier dream consisted of bountiful crops won through diligence and hard work, no amount of effort could change Idaho's climate. For many of Idaho's early settlers, hard work rewarded them with nothing more than the opportunity to work harder still. Despite (or, indeed, because of) Idaho's unfavorable conditions, the state contained sixty percent of all Carey Act land. That lion's share of irrigation projects did not lead to abundant agricultural success. Annie Pike Greenwood, after struggling alongside her husband and children on a farm that eventually failed, watched her neighbors face the same fate. In

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[53] Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, 113, 132.
[54] Wild, *Pioneer Conservationists of Western America,* 21.
[55] Fiege, *Irrigated Eden,* 143.

the end, Greenwood wrote that "scarcely any of the farmers in that sagebrush country have been able to hang onto the land."[56]

The Greenwood family's failure proves consistent with every detail of the Idaho settlement story. The cheapness of the land drew people who could not afford better land elsewhere and could also not afford the failure they found in the desert. Sadly, a hint of idealism runs counter to the accusation that settlers were tricked into moving out West. Worster found that a genuine belief spurred the hope that irrigation promoted wealth, that wealth promoted democracy, and that reclaiming the desert led the way to fairness and abundance.[57] If the Bureau of Reclamation made an honest mistake in its fallacious claims, the federal government followed that mistake with enough others to justify a century's worth of disillusioned Idahoans. Government-regulated wartime wheat prices, low potato prices imposed by shippers, year-round dry conditions typical of the high mountain desert, and the few options provided by rural Idaho life contributed to a bleak life and a bleaker outlook. Generation after generation of Idahoans found themselves caught in the same trap: living in small towns too far from larger cities where steady jobs might offer chances at higher education or a higher standard of living. While they might have rightly blamed the grandparents whose dreams abandoned them in the desert, Idahoans instead followed their forefathers' example and blamed the government.

Not only handed-down bias, but repeated disregard from the government, or perceived disregard, poisoned Idahoan attitudes about government. America's

[56] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 451.
[57] Worster, *Rivers of Empire,* 106.

involvement in the first World War demanded that already-struggling farmers had to contribute to wartime food production.[58] Annie Pike Greenwood wrote about this keenly felt hardship: "We were paying high for the war," she wrote, "yet all our prices were arbitrarily fixed by those who never thought of computing the cost of production; consequently we were able to pay almost no debts except labor costs. Good Old Grandma Government told us we must go into debt to feed some of her sons whom she had sent out to murder her neighbor's boys." The fixed price of agricultural productions might have proved enough to sour Idahoans against their government, but Annie's displeasure redoubled during one of the war years, when "the commission man bought all the fruit and shipped it out… the country women of Idaho were robbed, for they could not afford to buy canned goods."[59] For all that Idaho farmers felt patriotic and proud of their soldiering sons, they despaired for the miseries of their children, for the sacrifices that grew too high, and higher still in wartime. The government's demands for affordable foodstuffs, bought below cost from the labor-calloused hands of hungry people, angered Idahoans further still. The end of the war brought no respite. Renewed European production after the war and the wartime population growth that had encouraged farmers to increase holdings set the stage for economic collapse. Bank failures, low commodity prices, and crop surpluses struck Idaho even before the Great Depression. Farm income, $116,000,000 in 1929 dropped to $41,000,000 by 1932.[60]

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[58] Wells and Hart, *Idaho*, 120.
[59] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 339, 344.
[60] Wells and Hart, *Idaho,*120, 123, 127.

Idaho's experience bore some marked differences to the American experience. Economic hardships struck deeper, unrelieved by opportunities found in more urban settings. The lack of religious diversity provided one narrow brand of solace in difficult times though for some, it offered none at all. For Idahoans, any sense of security came through protecting their livelihoods, most of which relied upon natural resources, all of which hinged on water rights. Idahoans, like all Americans, developed an appreciation for wilderness even as they developed an understanding for the importance of water and air quality. Unlike many other Americans, Idahoans often faced the dilemma of choosing between conservation and progress. Postwar Idaho, like postwar America, saw dramatic changes brought about by electricity, new technologies, and new attitudes. Idaho, however, contained some of the largest undeveloped forests in the nation, along with the spawning grounds for America's richest supply of Chinook salmon. In Idaho, change proved especially dramatic where untouched resources tantalized both industrialists and conservationists. The deciding factor: disillusioned, possessive Idaho voters who treasured their great outdoors, but could not go without steady work.

CHAPTER TWO – DAMS AND FISH

By the end of the 19th century the bulk of America had changed from the howling wilderness to an industrialized – or, largely industrialized – nation. Nature had been subdued enough that the works of writers Robert A. Woods (*The City Wilderness)* and Upton Sinclair (*The Jungle*) began to reflect a disenchantment with urban life. Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* and Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan* put nature in a positive light, emphasizing the desirable traits cultivated by a life spent in the wilderness. The dwindling of wilderness led to Frederick Jackson Turner's historical essays linking nature to sacred American values. The time had come when, as Roderick Nash described, "the average citizen could approach wilderness with the viewpoint of the vacationer rather than the conqueror."[61] Vacationing and the advent of the tourism industry supported the creation of national parks and national monuments. The establishment of Craters of the Moon National Monument in 1924 was the first sign that Idahoans found value in their desert land, though, arguably, they found it easier to preserve a portion of desert in the name of tourism since they could find no other profitable use for it.[62]

America's changing values and the increasing worth of wilderness emerged not only through grassroots preservation efforts and nature-themed literature but in the

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[61] Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* 143, 145-46, 156.
[62] J.M. Neil, *To the White Clouds: Idaho's Conservation Saga, 1900-1970* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2005), 40-41.

creation of America's largest youth organization, the Boy Scouts. Established in 1910, the Boy Scouts of America fostered qualities such as citizenship, honesty, and self-reliance through, among other things, outdoor activities. That the Boy Scout handbook outsold everything but the Bible for a thirty-year stretch speaks clearly of the premium Americans placed on moral development and nature's place in moral growth.[63] Members of the LDS faith would embrace the Boy Scouts program so entirely that they would integrate it into their religious teachings, assigning young men to attend Scout functions as part of their church attendance.[64] As early as 1908 *The Idaho Statesman* ran an article entitled "Guard Nature's Gifts," referencing the impact of irrigation upon Shoshone Falls and criticizing "those who would turn them to commercial use, while the beautiful Thousand Springs are already in part destroyed. This should not be."[65] Part of the change in public sentiment, not unique to Idaho, came with the spread of the automobile. As cars extended the traveler's reach far beyond where human feet or even horses could venture in a reasonable amount of time, more and more Americans explored the wilderness areas beyond their city's boundaries.

America in a broad sense but Idaho in a more particular fashion "saw, in the first 15 years after the end of World War II, a dramatic increase in the number and variety of available outdoor recreation areas, and they rushed out to enjoy them." In that rush, they clashed with the ambitions of industry, with federal policies, and with one another.

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[63] Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* 148.
[64] Robert Lewis and Matthew Lewis, "Every Young Man, ages 8-18, Deserves a Quality Scouting Program," Welcome to LDS Scouting, http://www.ldsscouting.org/index.shtml. (Accessed 3/8/2009).
[65] "Guard Nature's Gifts," *The Idaho Statesman,* 3/19/1908.

Ideology played a role in the Idaho perspective; one 1953 letter to *The Idaho Statesman* insisted, "if this country weren't to be used for man's benefit the land wouldn't be fit for agriculture and trees and minerals wouldn't have been there for our use." This grand sense of entitlement was countered the following year by another letter to the editor from someone "sickened to see the beautiful countryside of Idaho laid to waste by a few thoughtless money-hungry individuals who care nothing for the rights of the many."[66] Following the postwar fad with outdoor recreation, Idaho tourism and population "exploded" bringing about a clash of traditional beneficial-use ideology and new ideas about environmental protection.[67]

Roughly two-thirds of Idaho, all public land, belongs to all Americans. Environmental protection, policy, and regulation requires governmental involvement. It causes a great deal of contention among Idahoans because they, and not other Americans, have struggled to survive on the unforgiving landscape. Decisions made by environmental groups or government agencies imply that Idahoans lack the wits, the integrity or both to devise and implement a suitable land-use policy. When Idahoans poison wolves, poach big game or trespass, it reflects not how they feel about the environment, but how they feel about authority. They resent the implication that their behavior should be dictated by someone who has not lived in Idaho. When Idahoans joined the Sagebrush Rebellion, when they allied themselves with Idaho Power instead of

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[66] L.D. Bedel, "What Made Idaho," letter to *The Idaho Statesman,* 3/4/1953 and Gordon T. Lucky, "For Dredge Initiative," letter to *The Idaho Statesman,* 8/1/1954.
[67] Randy Stapilus, *Paradox Politics: People and Power in Idaho* (Boise, ID: Ridenbaugh Press, 1988), 33.

the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), when they gave every advantage to local irrigators, when they looked the other way while a major corporate employer polluted their rivers, they did not ignore the cost to their environment. They sided with the lesser of two evils, with the evil that offered them jobs or represented any interest other than the federal government that, to their perspective, had treated them with disregard. Their willingness to pay the environmental price reveals their options, or, rather, their lack of options. Other factors, religion chief among them, have also steered their choices.

Idahoans rarely speak ill of irrigators, much less openly oppose their practices. Pious, underprivileged people flocked into Idaho, assuming "the God-given potential of the land," without the money to take them elsewhere and without any reason to doubt the promises about gardens flourishing in the desert.[68] The myth of an agricultural Eden survived so well because it went along with local religion and because it also served capitalist and industrialist desires.[69] Subjugating the desert pleased devout church-goers and money-mongers alike. Irrigation experts, such as Frank Nimmo Jr. in 1889, offered proclamations to stir hearts in both camps: "Upon us rests the obligation of the Divine mandate – 'subdue the earth.'"[70] Senator William Borah, bolstering appreciation for the natural wonder of Stanley Basin in 1915, also invoked Divinity in his declaration: "nature

[68] Fiege, *Irrigated Eden,* 52. While god-fearing settlers of varied faiths may have believed in deity's role in Manifest Destiny, Mormon settlers' tie to the Salt Lake Valley was so strong that they erected a "This is the Place" monument to observe the importance of their forefathers' arrival in the area. Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 113.
[69] Fiege, *Irrigated Eden,* 200.
[70] Worster, *Rivers of Empire,* 116.

has made here a park – little can men do other than ratify the divine decree."[71] Another decree, found in the state's constitution, became sacrosanct if not necessarily divine: "the right to divert and appropriate the unappropriated waters of any natural stream to beneficial uses shall never be denied."[72]

Historically, water rights have determined the homesteader's fate. "First in time, first in right" allowed early arrivals to secure their needs before those who came later. The practice spared some irrigators and doomed others. Irrigation districts could help a whole region flourish, bringing cooperative efforts and a measure of fairness into water distribution. Cooperation, however successful at the community level, often failed between individuals who, rather than take disputes to court, would battle in their fields over a hint of water theft. The delicate balance of water rights, the construction of canals and reservoirs, and the ongoing battle against rodents, insects, and weeds transformed Idaho from a trapper's territory into an agriculture-based state.[73] In the 19th century Idaho established the water rights that would anchor the state to its own past. Dams, built initially to control irrigation water, served a new purpose in the 20th century: hydroelectricity. Electricity, though profitable and a force that changed daily life, was not powerful enough to trump the might of agricultural water rights – as the controversy of Hells Canyon would show.

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[71] William E. Borah, "In Rugged Grandeur and Scenic Wealth, the Proposed National Park in Idaho Surpasses Yellowstone and Yosemite," *The Idaho Statesman,* 8/1/1915.
[72] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style,* 125.
[73] Fiege, *Irrigated Eden,* 82-83.

Unfortunately, hydroelectric dams interfered with more than the water rights of farmers and involved a graver issue than the debate over who should most profit through the sale of electricity. Dams, particularly those designed to meet the needs of hydroelectric engineering, endangered runs of wild salmon and steelhead trout. Despite protests from citizens and the environmentally-minded, conservation, if considered at all, was not a priority, no matter what cost to generations of Idahoans.

The Bureau of Reclamation, along with private corporations like Idaho Power, did improve some aspects of irrigated farming, for both farmers and the environment. Electricity brought convenience and comfort to rural homes, and made pump irrigation possible. Gravity irrigation often led to over-application of water, salinated soil and nitrogen contamination of the aquifer; pumped-and-sprinkled irrigation lessened those dangers.[74] The Bureau's Minidoka Irrigation Project, with a power plant that began operation in 1909, put further demands on an already over-burdened river, adding dams that slowed the Snake and depleted stocks of wild salmon.[75] Early America, lacking the man-made wonders of older nations, celebrated dams as massive feats of modern engineering. The federal government's construction of the Grand Coulee set a post-war precedent and told America, in unarguable terms, that the socioeconomic greater good surpassed any value placed upon the environment.[76] For all its awe-inspiring engineering, the Grand Coulee did not include fish ladders; the concrete monolith paved

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[74] Susan M. Stacy, *Legacy of Light: A History of Idaho Power Company* (Boise, ID: Idaho Power Company, 1991), 35.
[75] Eric A. Stene, "The Minidoka Project," Minidoka Project History, (1997). http://www.usbr.gov/dataweb/projects/idaho/minidoka/history.html. (Accessed 2/15/2009).
[76] Karl Brooks, *Public Power, Private Dams* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 4.

the way for American economic progress, but it provided an insurmountable barrier to environmental conservation, and to salmon.[77] Idaho, though land-locked, held spawning ground for wild salmon, cherished by Native American tribes, sport fishermen, and commercial fishing interests. The price of irrigation extended beyond taxpayer dollars and failed farms to include whole species of wild salmon.

In 1947 Interior Secretary Julius Krug told the Federal Power Commission that only a federal dam in Hells Canyon could deliver the electricity needed by the Pacific Northwest and that no private entity could adequately meet the region's requirements. The dam would have stood 750 feet over foundation height.[78] It would have consigned North America's deepest river gorge to a watery grave. Karl Brooks, three-term Idaho state senator (1986-1992) and current Professor of History at University of Kansas, wrote *Public Power, Private Dams: The Hells Canyon High Dam Controversy,* in 2006. The work explores the political and legal issues of the proposed Hells Canyon High Dam, detailing the role of Idaho Power and the interest held by Idaho citizens, Native American groups, Oregon commercial fishing, conservation groups, and Pacific Northwest consumers. While Brooks' focus remains primarily with the legalities of the controversy, he does explore the lasting environmental impact of dams on Idaho culture and identity. He also explains the nature of anadromous fish (fish spawned in rivers that live out their adult lives in the ocean and return to the same rivers to spawn), and the importance of

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[77] Ed Chaney, "A Question of Balance: Water/Energy – Salmon and Steelhead Production in the Upper Columbia River Basin Summary Report," p. 4, November 1978, Ted Trueblood Collection MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 7.
[78] Brooks, *Public Power, Private Dams,* 8, 56.

Idaho habitat for the survival of such creatures. Throughout, Brooks maintains the importance of Idaho on the national stage in setting a precedence for corporate and state's rights, and suggests that Idaho's role in the controversy reflects Idahoans' independent nature.

Dams provided another means for farmers to harness, tame, and master the forces of nature. For religious types, dams aided in the godly endeavor to create an artificial Eden in the West. For those with purely secular goals, dams offered a measure of insurance against a dry season, pooling water in reservoirs for later use. Even Greenwood, who routinely referenced nature sympathetically, fell under the spell of irrigational conquest: "Especially in making a canal," she wrote, "should I feel that I were exercising some of the prerogatives of the Creator."[79] Despite the celebratory nature of dam-building in America, the engineering marvels did not guarantee sound irrigation practices. While the dams of the American West served as man's attempted mastery of a little-known nature, they were only that: an attempt. Dams did not provide a cure-all to the problems plaguing Western farmers. American irrigation methods garnered criticism as early as 1885 when Alfred Deakin, leader of an Australian commission, studied the much-praised irrigation works of the Pacific Northwest. Appalled by what he found, Deakin proclaimed American irrigation to be woefully unplanned, wasteful, and given to greater risks than profit could justify.[80] Water lost through seepage and evaporation, water soaked up by the willows planted to shore up banks, banks collapsed by burrowing

[79] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 273.
[80] Worster, *Rivers of Empire,* 146.

rodents, flow impeded by grate-clogging weeds, soil depleted of nutrients through overwatering - the construction of dams removed none of these obstacles.

The social, agricultural, and economic problems Idahoans faced during early settlement and wartime set the stage for a 20th century conflict that determined the fate of the New Deal and reaffirmed Idahoan conviction about the sanctity of water rights. The relationship between Idahoans and the federal government, and the role of water rights in that relationship, derailed (after much dispute) federal plans to construct a high dam in Idaho's Hells Canyon. Boise author J.M. Neil observed that in the 1930s Idaho ranked eighth "in per capita federal expenditures" and "received far more than the average share of the New Deal recovery programs," but by the arrival of the 1950s, Idahoans had grown weary of their own reliance upon federal assistance.[81] The dilemma of the Hells Canyon controversy, a choice between furthering the New Deal or yielding to private business, spread across America. It galvanized opinions on either side of the conservation question because it would set new precedence about state's rights. As far away as New York, where the *New York Times* ran pages on Hells Canyon, Americans cared about the dispute. In 1952 President Eisenhower visited Idaho and drew a record-breaking crowd, proving that public power and water rights meant a great deal to federal politicians and to the average Idahoan.[82] Idahoans, though glad to identify themselves as mavericks, found common ground when they felt threatened. The proposition of putting Hells Canyon and Idaho water in the hands of a federally-owned corporation (in that case, the Columbia

[81] J.M. Neil, *Discovering Our Surroundings,*(Boise, ID: Public Archive and Research Library, MS 2/1436) 186.
[82] Brooks, "It Happened in Hells Canyon" and *Public Power, Private Dams,* 173.

Valley Authority, or CVA) did threaten Idahoans on many levels: economically, culturally, politically.

The controversy dragged on, from Eisenhower's administration into Truman's. To Idahoans, intent on safeguarding their water rights, the proposed dam existed only as "tentacles of the federal octopus," as one editorial put it.[83] President Truman's stand made it clear that the potential good of a federal high dam far outweighed the needs and rights of commercial fishing interests, Native Americans, and outdoor enthusiasts."[84] In Truman's defense, neither the public nor environmental managers fully understood the ramifications of ecology and extinction at that time. Also, in the wake of a Great Depression and WWII, social betterment overshadowed the then-trivial-seeming entitlement of commercial fishers to their livelihood, of Native Americans to treaty promises, of outdoor lovers to recreation, and of anadromous fish to their very existence. For a president responsible for the political, social, and economic success of an entire nation, entrusted with the legacy of the New Deal, the chorus of complaints from a fistful of Westerners surely seemed a minor inconvenience, not a significant protest in defense of valid American rights. After all, the government had federalized the Pacific Northwest electrical grid in the name of war production and ninety-five percent of Columbia Basin farms and ranches enjoyed the benefits of electricity.[85] While Truman wondered why Northwesterners would hinder the greater good, Idahoans wondered why a president, or

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[83] Neil, *To the White Clouds,* 102.
[84] Brooks, *Public Power, Private Dams*, 16.
[85] Ibid., 34-35.

anyone in Washington, D.C., should get to decide the fate of their publically-held resources.

As early as 1932, tensions between private and public power had emerged in the presidential campaign when, as explained in Idaho Power's commissioned corporate history *Legacy of Light*: "Franklin Delano Roosevelt condemned utility advertising, some of which was aimed at schoolchildren and much of which equated patriotism with a favorable attitude to investor-owned utilities."[86] *Legacy of Light: A History of Idaho Power Company,* written by Susan Stacy in 1991, celebrates (in near-reverential fashion) the success of Idaho Power as a private utility. Despite the work's obvious bias, it does offer well-researched background material on settlement, irrigation, and hydroelectricity in Idaho, as well as a good overview of the changes brought to agriculture, industry, and American daily life through electricity. Stacy includes the political and controversial side of Idaho Power's history (always painting Idaho Power as the hero), and includes the environmental damage done through dams and the pursuit of hydroelectricity. Stacy's able authorship manages to avoid blaming Idaho Power for losses to salmon runs, taking the approach that the company did everything it could without going out of business and that, indeed, the real villain remains federal power projects (against whom Idaho Power battled to protect the unsuspecting rural people of Idaho).

Idaho Power had considered federal power projects a problem long before the Hells Canyon controversy caught the nation's attention. As the debate intensified,

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[86] Stacy, *Legacy of Light*, 102.

interested (and partisan) parties chose sides. Democrats, liberal farm groups, labor unions, and customers in favor of subsidized public power supported the Hells Canyon High Dam. Corporate utilities and all northwestern Republican governors stood against the proposed dam, sharing Washington Governor Arthur Langlie's criticism for the Columbia Valley Authority, that it "places broad powers in the hands of a few without the usual checks and balances."[87] While Democrats and Republicans fought over the semantics of federal power, Idahoans learned a lasting lesson: their population, despite its low numbers, could alter federal policy. If Idahoans resented slights at federal hands, they nevertheless discovered that they could have their way in a fight even against the government. They learned, as scholar Karl Brooks would later observe, that "Americans, one way or another, usually get their way. And it's usually through politics."[88] The political power of Idaho's irrigators, combined with the legal rights of Idaho Power, combined with a unanimous demand from Idaho's citizenry, determined the fate of Hells Canyon.

Idaho Power utilized the fight to secure its position and insisted that the government threatened private enterprise; the government's counter, that Idaho Power stood in the way of public interest, included dire reminders of power shortages in the late 1940s. Not only power shortages, but a 1948 flood in Vanport, Oregon, that claimed 50 lives, fueled government appeals for the federal high dam. Promises of flood control, subsidized electricity, and dam-funded reclamation projects fell on Idahoan ears deaf to

[87] Brooks, *Public Power, Private Dams,* 73-74.
[88] Brooks, "It Happened in Hells Canyon."

everything but warnings about the threat to their water rights.[89] In that same year, as the public attended gatherings on the matter, William Welsh, water master for both the Boise and Lower Snake Rivers, spoke to a Boise crowd of 1,200. Local radio broadcast his speech. Steward of water and of water rights, Welsh warned Southern Idahoans that CVA would have "unlimited powers of condemnation." The Pacific Northwest Development Association referred to CVA's Hells Canyon plan as "a socialist scheme" while a Northern Idaho paper offered grim commentary on the dangers of federal monopolies.[90] At the end of the 1940s, with McCarthyism starting to flourish, such turns of phrase excited, angered and inspired audiences – not only Idahoans anxious over water rights, but most Americans quaking under the (largely imaginary) Red Scare.

As the debate over Hells Canyon reached across America, the government programs that once supported genuine needs seemed overbearing and even suspect under the gathering paranoia about Communism. In Oregon, the *Capital Journal* predicted that federally subsidized power would lead to a dictatorship while, on the other side of the nation, Connecticut's *New Haven Register* spoke grimly of the Hells Canyon question, referencing "the superstate and the new society."[91] Where the government accused Idaho Power of displaying self-interest and greed, Idaho Power countered with grim words about government control. Idaho Power's position mirrored the position Idahoans perceived as their own: the minority against the majority, the poorer against the richer. As Brooks described it, "Idaho Power's ferocious campaign against Hells Canyon High

[89] Brooks, *Public Power, Private Dams*, 55, 59, 65.
[90] Ibid., 69-70.
[91] Ibid., 70.

Dam deepened the uncertainty poisoning American public life."[92] Southern Idaho's lack of experience with public power aided that campaign. Oregon, Washington and even northern Idaho had closer and more positive ties with government, through public utilities and mining and lumber unions.[93] The uncertainty that poisoned American life and the catalyzing power of fear united Snake River Basin irrigators against the dam that would have created a reservoir ninety-three miles long. A reservoir that size, they reasoned, would deprive them of the water they needed to grow crops, deprive them of their profit, and their livelihood.[94]

The Idaho Statesman accused Truman of leading "a pack of socialist wolves who have deliberately misrepresented the natural resource problem at every opportunity." That simple sentence appealed to conservatives, to irrigators, and to the small but growing number of people concerned about environmental issues.[95] Though the early 1900s had distracted America with the grave challenges of two World Wars, with the 1918 flu pandemic, with the Dustbowl and the Great Depression, the industrial growth of the mid-20th century allowed Americans to stop relying so heavily on federal support and guidance. Economic successes and new technology freed Americans from the insecurities that had previously kept them from worrying about who should manage public resources. After the devastating impact the Grand Coulee Dam had upon salmon and steelhead populations, conservationists and commercial fishers alike feared what a

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[92] Brooks, *Public Power, Private Dams*, 19.
[93] Stacy, *Legacy of Light,* 145.
[94] Brooks, *Public Power, Private Dams,* 54, 84.
[95] Ibid., 181.

high dam in Hells Canyon would do to the northwest's remaining anadromous fish population. The federal agencies responsible for public resources accomplished little in the struggle for fish conservation. Oregon's State Fish Commission fought to preserve salmon, reroute waterways and stop dam construction while the Bureau of Reclamation did little to help. Concerns for fishing, both recreational and commercial, garnered support for whichever entity would kill fewer fish. In the end, that entity proved to be private enterprise in the name of Idaho Power.

Truman and federal power agencies struggled to make Hells Canyon an issue of patriotism, going as far to say that the Allies would have lost WWII without the power of America's federal dams.[96] Unfortunately for Truman, attempts to rally support by calling up memories of WWII did more harm than good. Navy bombing in Lake Pend Oreille, while arguably a necessity in the name of national security, had done little to endear Idahoans to the merits of sacrificing natural resources in a fit of patriotism. Though Idahoans had gladly supported desert bombing ranges (they placed little value on desert lands, which offered few agricultural or recreational opportunities), the Navy's Pend Oreille activities endangered prime fishing spots. Presidential demands for more environmental sacrifice for military causes, particularly when no longer at war, failed to resonate deeply with Idahoans. Indeed, the conscription of Western natural resources deepened Westerners' belief that their states were considered mere colonies of eastern America. Thus, federal calls for environmental sacrifice made Idahoans more inclined to

[96] Brooks, *Public Power, Private Dams*, 86, 136, 143, 148.

side with conservationists.[97] Any hint of water mismanagement, or of unjust water usage, blinded Idahoans to all other issues. Annie Pike Greenwood had once identified a neighbor as "that old hypocritical water-stealer" as though calling the man a murderer or child molester, as if no worse label than *water stealer* existed.[98] The 1953 Supreme Court "Roanoke Rapids Case" decided in favor of licensing private dams on interstate rivers because neither law nor public opinion supported further expansion of public power.[99]

Dam-building in Idaho, while it would prove controversial at both the state and national levels, served as another of Idaho's ironies. Federal dam construction, meant to serve Idaho's agriculture as well as provide hydroelectricity, both of which benefited the state economically, nevertheless reinforced public fears of the far-reaching power of government. Additionally, enthusiasm dwindled for support of endless progress. The construction of Palisades Dam in 1958 displaced farming families and gave them no options. "The local people didn't want the dam but felt powerless," recounted Jerry Hansen, "the government was going to take it; you just tried to get a good price for your farm."[100] Benefits notwithstanding, the same old lesson applied again and again: rural Idahoans could but stand aside while the government did what it wanted, unless they could all stand firmly together. Idaho, in stopping the construction of a federal dam,

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[97] In 1944 the Navy conducted anti-aircraft gunnery practice, firing across Lake Pend Oreille (into a hillside), with state permission. In 1952, however, Idahoans protested the Navy's deep-water bomb testing, fearing the test would harm Pend Oreille fish, particularly the lake's prized Kamloop salmon. Neil, *To the White Clouds,* 92-93.
[98] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 300.
[99] Brooks, *Public Power, Private Dams,*187, 191, 216.
[100] Palmer, *The Snake River*, 9-10.

established that the unified will of the people could supersede federal plans. Though it happened in Idaho, the controversy mattered to all Americans who believed that something as necessary to daily life as electricity should not be controlled by the government through something publicly owned like water.[101]

President Truman's arguments for the Hells Canyon High Dam in 1948 illustrate the challenge of Idaho politics clearly. His call for flood control and his praise for the value of hydroelectricity in the war effort might have cut a great deal of ice elsewhere in the country but failed to influence Idahoans. In Idaho, where life itself turned on the ownership of water, patriotic dogma and histrionic demands for flood control failed to persuade those who knew too well how little nature could be controlled.[102] Truman, who perhaps had no chance to know better, had no idea which political strings to pull in Idaho to achieve the result he desired. Swaying Idaho voters required a closer understanding of constituents' ambitions and fears. In fairness to Idahoans, one should not suggest they opposed Truman's ideals out of callousness or a lack of patriotism; Idahoans opposed the Hells Canyon High Dam out of self-preservation. Everything in the experiences of their parents and grandparents had taught them that they could not afford to make mistakes with water. Those who shared Greenwood's opinion felt that something other than the desert landscape had destroyed their dreams. "No! It was not the sagebrush farm that had visited upon us this gross injustice, but the indifference, greed, and blindness of the

[101] Brooks, *Public Power, Private Dams*, 8.
[102] Ibid., 62.

public at large, as represented by… a Government of the politicians for themselves and their friends."[103]

Mismanagement of fisheries during the Hells Canyon controversy did little to improve anti-federal attitudes in Idaho. The 1947 Lower Columbia River Fishery Development Program meant to sacrifice upriver fish in favor of the costly rebuilding of downriver fisheries served neither Chinook salmon and steelhead trout, nor Native American rights and Oregon commercial fishing interests. The government lagged behind in funding fish conservation, and personal grudges between state and federal fish managers exacerbated the situation.[104] While Oregon's commercial fishing suffered from the dwindling populations of anadromous fish, Native American tribes suffered from the loss of salmon and the blatant disregard of their treaty rights, and Idaho outdoor enthusiasts and tourism suffered too. Those losses reinforced the notion that the federal government did not best serve the interests of Westerners, an unsettling fact in the lives of people who lived in a landscape comprised of so much federally-managed ground.

[103] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 452.
[104] Brooks, *Public Power, Private Dams,* 106, 111, 116.

CHAPTER THREE – THE WHITE CLOUDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRATS

Religion, tradition, and conservative values set the tone for life in Idaho for much of Idaho's history. The 1960s and 1970s saw marked change, however, after the election of two key environmentally-minded Democrats into Idaho political offices. Frank Church and Cecil Andrus both knew how to succeed in Idaho: they appealed to their constituents' religious and personal values while employing a sense of compromise between labor interests and conservation. In his support of the Wilderness Bill, Senator Frank Church spoke to Idahoans' religious views, asking them to protect "areas of unspoiled, pristine wilderness… [for] all those who find, in high and lonely places, a refreshment of the spirit and life's closest communion with God."[105] Legislation and documentation on wilderness routinely link the value of nature to spirituality. The original report on the establishment of the Idaho Primitive Area, written in 1931, declared that the Primitive Area meant "to conserve primitive conditions of environment… to afford unique opportunities for physical, mental, and spiritual recreation."[106] During the Hells Canyon controversy, Andrus suggested that the area "remain untouched by all but the hand of God."[107] The idea, poetic enough to appeal to environmental groups,

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[105] Sara Elizabeth Dant Ewert, *The Conversion of Senator Frank Church: The Evolution of an Environmentalist,* (Washington State University), 36.
[106] Ted Trueblood, "Unique Wilderness Threatened." Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 7, Folder 10.
[107] "Protection of the 'Clouds'," *The Idaho Statesman,* 1/12/1971.

reminded the state's self-appointed moral majority where their god-fearing loyalties should lie. The interplay of religion, politics, preservation, and federal dam projects gave way, in the 1970s, to another controversy, one which placed not only an environment champion in the Governor's office, but a Democratic one.

The proposed mine in the White Clouds brought protest even from the usual proponents of industry: ranchers, miners, and loggers. Although the proposed site lay in a relatively obscure mountain range (the White Clouds), outdoors enthusiasts rallied to protect it, with especial concern for the range's landmark: Castle Peak. Newspapers from around the state opposed the planned molybdenum mine and *The Idaho Statesman* declared "the state is not so desperate for dollars that it must be anxious to sacrifice the crown jewels of its natural heritage to relatively short term dollar benefits."[108] It would have made perfect sense if Idaho, with its Republican majority and history of favoring profit over conservation, had re-elected Republican incumbent governor Don Samuelson. Samuelson thought so, too, as he made no effort or suggestion toward preserving the White Clouds. Samuelson, in fact, went so far as to dismiss Castle Peak as "nothing but sagebrush on one side and scraggly trees on the other," unworthy of concern, much less conservation.[109] Chairman of the State Parks Board, Ernest Day, resigned over Samuelson's handling of the issue, stating, "we Idahoans are not a group of persons who will sit idly by while a giant firm from outside ravages the very best of our land." *The Idaho Statesman,* echoing Day's resolve, asked, "Are the people of this state so poor that

[108] Ewert, *The Conversion of Senator Frank Church,* 112-113.
[109] Ibid., 114.

they cannot afford to protect a small area (eight or ten miles) that is one of, if not the, most magnificent in the state?"[110]

The White Clouds issue, like the Hells Canyon controversy, reached out beyond Idaho. The *New York Times* ran an editorial supporting conservation in general and the White Clouds in particular: "not only should there be a permanent ban on new mining claims, but all existing claims should be quashed. Marginal economic benefits do not justify despoiling White Cloud Peaks."[111] Local author J.M. Neil wrote that not only did the White Clouds issue win Andrus the election, "it also crystallized a vocal and powerful political coalition dedicated to the ongoing task of protecting all of the state's natural heritage in national wilderness areas."[112] Andrus won the election, and credited his victory to "Idahoans who carried a hunting or fishing license."[113]

Andrus' experience made him an expert on the subject of preservation, dams, and Idaho's status among neighboring states and on the national stage. His autobiography, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style,* goes beyond Andrus' career. He addresses Idahoan culture, and how that culture challenged and shaped the style of his leadership. In a public service career that spanned twenty-four years, Andrus served as state governor and, under President Carter, as Secretary of the Interior. A Democrat, and one determined to promote environmental protection, Andrus' perspective and experience

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[110] "Ex-Park Chief Says Quitting Enables Future Fight to Save White Clouds," *The Idaho Statesman,* 5/10/1969, and "Narrowing the Conservation Gap," *The Idaho Statesman,* 6/4/1969.
[111] Ewert, *The Conversion of Senator Frank Church,* 115.
[112] Neil, *Discovering Our Surroundings*, 256.
[113] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style*, 82.

provide an unlikely tale of success in a conservative, Republican state. Additionally, Andrus explores the balance of power between Idaho's densely populated capital and the concentrated irrigators' influence in the state's Snake River Plains region.

Cecil Andrus served Idaho as Governor from 1971-1977 and again from 1987-1995; he served the nation as Secretary of the Interior from 1977-1981. When writing about Andrus for *Field & Stream*, Idaho author Ted Trueblood introduced him to fellow outdoor enthusiasts as "one of us… a sportsman – a hunter and a fisherman."[114] Andrus' appreciation for wilderness appealed to outdoor lovers and his political style and his aims allied him with the majority of Idahoans. As Trueblood told the tale, "In 1970 there was a strong push for open-pit mining in the White Clouds… the incumbent was all for it. Andrus said, 'Never!' and the voters agreed with him." The voters did agree and Ted Trueblood praised Andrus' "courage to come out for wilderness and then stay with it" in a "state dominated since Day One by agriculture, livestock, mining, and lumbering." Even with Andrus' staunch support of the environment, however, Trueblood pointed out that Andrus served the interests of both outdoorsmen and economic growth. [115]

Andrus' noteworthy achievements included curbing dredge mine abuses, increasing funding for fish and game activities in state parks, opposing the proposed coal-fired plant in the Boise area, supporting the Birds of Prey area, curtailing air pollution from FMC and Bunker Hill, and curbing water pollution from J.R. Simplot's

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[114] Ted Trueblood, "Inside the Interior's Superior," Field and Stream (1977) p. 19. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 5, Folder 3.
[115] Ibid., 19.

organization.[116] Not only Trueblood and Andrus' other close allies spoke highly of his work. *Reader's Digest* praised "President Carter's Interior Secretary" as a man "determined to do what is right for *all* Americans." In the article, Andrus himself is quoted: "The public lands belong to the backpackers and the ghetto dwellers as well as to the ranchers and miners. I haven't denied development interests their representation. I've simply extended it to others as well." In a bold, potentially Idahoan-alienating statement, Andrus declared, "If I'm faced with development without adequate safeguards, I'll come down on the side of the environment."[117] Especially during his first stint as Governor, Andrus took considerable risk with his political career in defending the environment when new EPA and OSHA standards clashed with economic concerns.

Not only did Idahoans make Andrus the first Western governor elected over an environmental issue, they reelected him in the following election with seventy-one percent of the vote. His success and popularity stemmed from his ability to find common ground with the opposing forces of every issue. "He was generally regarded as a moderate," wrote journalist Cassandra Tate, "a man who could go fishing with an industry executive one week and with a Sierra Clubber the next".[118] Andrus' initial gubernatorial election, as well as the lasting impact of the White Clouds controversy, serve as the main focus of author J.M. Neil's work *To the White Clouds: Idaho's Conservation Saga, 1900-1970*. Using newspaper accounts from around the state, Neil

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[116] Chris Carlson, letter to Ted Trueblood, 9/29/1980. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 5, Folder 3.
[117] James Nathan Miller, "Secretary Andrus makes his stand," *Reader's Digest,* March 1978. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 5, Folder 3.
[118] Cassandra Tate, "The Man Who Runs America's Wilderness," *Horticulture,* January 1978, p. 60, 62. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 5, Folder 3.

tracks the evolution of Idahoan environmentalism, including the state's three main regions: northern, southwestern, and southeastern Idaho. Neil restricts his commentary to a minimum, allowing readers to form their own interpretations while still guiding the topic through Idaho's contentious and sometimes contradictory environmental history.

Idaho's rich natural resources included not only ores and timber, water and agricultural crops, but salmon too. Though Oregon treasured its commercial salmon fishing, and though the smolts (juvenile fish) went westward to grow to maturity in the Pacific Ocean, Idaho contained the spawning beds that waited for returning fish, generation after generation. Through both genuine ignorance and deliberate disregard, logging and mining destroyed the rich spawning beds, some made unreachable through the construction of dams. Unregulated commercial fishing overharvested the dwindling numbers of salmon and compounded the problem. Ed Chaney, director of the Northwest Resource Information Center, identified the foundation of the problem: "for the past three quarters of a century a man or woman could come and go and do pretty much as he or she pleased and the rivers take the hindmost."[119] No one had a plan for what Americans would do when only "the hindmost" remained for them as well. Annual catches of Columbia River summer Chinook in the late 1800s averaged between 20 and 30 million

[119] Ed Chaney, "A Question of Balance," p. 11, November 1978. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 7.

pounds, but Chaney found that "the upper Columbia River segment of the run was devastated by the uncompensated loss of habitat to the Grand Coulee Dam in 1941."[120]

Senator Frank Church, an unlikely success as a Democrat in a largely Republican state, risked his popularity and his career by adopting the plight of the salmon. In 1959 Church called for the protection of the Salmon River, for "no other river system contributes so greatly to the Chinook runs." By 1961 Fish and Game concluded that the McNary, The Dalles, Ice Harbor, and Brownlee dams had destroyed roughly half the original salmon and steelhead habitat. Cut off from spawning grounds, killed in dam turbines or simply unable to reach the ocean before they transformed into salt-water creatures, fish died in startling numbers. Over half the Chinook that had reached Middle Snake spawning grounds in 1957 failed to return in 1958 and 1959. The downstream migratory salmon and Chinook suffered mortality rates reaching seventy-eight percent in 1959.[121] When he took the Wild Rivers Bill to the Senate in 1966, Church reminded his fellow Senators that future generations deserved "more than a legacy of technology" and offered the words of Lyndon Johnson, who had said, "We must also leave them a glimpse of the world as God really made it, not just as it looked when we got through with it."[122]

Ed Chaney's "Columbia Basin Salmon and Steelhead Report" from 1978 explained that Congress authorized four dams on the lower main-stem Snake River 1945.

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[120] Ed Chaney, "Columbia Basin Salmon and Steelhead Report," p. 6, July 29, 1977, Number 5. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 7.
[121] Ewert, *The Conversion of Senator Frank Church,* 20-22.
[122] Frank Church, Statement by Senator Frank Church," 1/17/1966. Frank Church Papers, MSS 56, Box 156, Folder 9.

The dams, completed between 1961 and 1975, caused "direct losses to northwest fisheries… [which] amounted to a very conservatively estimated $35 million per year. Major summer and fall Chinook runs had been reduced to the threshold of extinction." The vexation in the matter rises from Congress' unfulfilled promise of compensation. Figures for 1978 find that "When multiplied by the 750,500 angler days projected for lower Snake compensation, the total would be more than $30 million per year." [123] The promise and patriotism heaped upon the Idaho public to bolster support for hydroelectricity, irrigation, and flood control robbed them not only of the natural resources provided by a living river, but also of the economic benefits provided by a thriving tourist and fishing trade. As Idaho lawyer Bruce Bowler argued, "The salmon and steelhead fisheries are worth far more than the tradeoffs of kilowatt production."[124] Not only citizens, however, clamored for low utility rates. Industries, like aluminum production, opposed increases to electricity costs and, thus, opposed salmon preservation efforts that could translate to higher electricity rates.[125]

Dams hindered salmon passage whether the fish moved upstream or down. Upstream migration, even with the aid of fish ladders, proved difficult, and the journey included miles of reservoir that fish had to navigate to reach spawning beds. Fish en route to the ocean died in dam turbines. Fish lucky enough to cross dams at times of heavy spill avoided turbine dangers only to perish in the high levels of nitrogen created

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[123] Ed Chaney, "Columbia Basin Salmon and Steelhead Report," p. 1, 4, July 6, 1978, Number 11, Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 7.
[124] Bruce Bowler, letter to Cecil Andrus 12/12/1978, Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 7.
[125] Rocky Barker, *Saving All the Parts: Reconciling Economics and the Endangered Species Act* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1993), 67.

by the excess spill.[126] Of course, many fish never encountered the turbines or nitrogen dangers. They became "lost in the slack water of reservoirs… drift[ed] about aimlessly, prey to other fish, disease, and premature transformation to their salt water form."[127] Other perils, some hand-administered by the very officials charged to safeguard salmon, proved costly. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers closed and blocked the John Day dam for 2 months in 1968 to speed dam completion. The fish ladders, non-operational at the time, provided no safe passage while the amount of water going over the spillway raised nitrogen levels enough to kill the fish trapped at the dam's base. At least 20,000 salmon died, though Chaney, then an officer for the Oregon Fish Commission, believed hundreds of thousands died. BPA fishery biologist Gerald Bouck claimed the number would remain unknown "because a crew of federal employees allegedly buried dead adult salmon." The incident cost Chaney his job when he gave photos of the clean-up efforts to the Portland *Oregonian*.[128] In 1973, Gerald Collins, Division Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), wrote, "Runs of juvenile salmon and steelhead originating in headwater regions of the Snake River were among those most severely affected because of the gauntlet of dams and impoundments they had to pass before reaching the Pacific." While acknowledging the impact of the dams upon salmon runs, Collins remained "excited about the prospects of the transportation concept" and, unable to predict the dismal eventual outcome, praised the potential "for doubling runs of salmon

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[126] Ed Chaney, "A Question of Balance," p. 6, November 1978. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 7.
[127] Stacy, *Legacy of Light*, 208.
[128] Barker, *Saving All the Parts*, 79-80.

and steelhead destined for the Snake River Basin."[129] Unfortunately, by 1991 the NMFS had to put Snake River Sockeye Salmon on the Endangered Species Act List, because since 1973, the salmon had done anything but double in number.[130]

In the frenzy of taming the desert and harnessing hydro power the gradual loss of salmon garnered little criticism beyond conservation circles. Early preservation attempts included overland trucking of salmon to bypass obstacles, a practice that ultimately yielded poor results. Citizens occasionally raised voices of dissent, as when Mrs. F. E. McAfee wrote to the editor of *The Idaho Statesman* complaining of the salmon losses caused by Barber Dam and its fish ladder: "the fish would have to have wings to have gotten up it," she wrote, adding that many of the older settlers shared her anger. "In spite of all the complaints of the Barber dam, we were pushed aside and the Boise Payette, or Barber Lumber company, went on its merry ways [sic]."[131] Like Annie Pike Greenwood and countless other Idahoans, Mrs. McAfee expressed an age-old frustration: *we were pushed aside.* The interests of irrigation and hydroelectricity effectively trumped the needs of anadromous fish and the protests raised by common citizens. As Cecil Andrus concluded, "If fish ladders saved salmon runs, fine. If not, progress had its price."[132]

The needs of outdoors enthusiasts, salmon, Native Americans, of all Americans, compared not at all to the needs of the Columbia Basin's energy demands. Chaney's

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[129] Gerald B. Collins, letter to Ted Trueblood, 4/11/1973. Ted Trueblood Collection MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 4.
[130] Barker, *Saving All the Parts*, 4.
[131] "Boise Salmon Run Termination Told," letter to editor by Mrs. F. E. McAfee. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 4.
[132] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style*, 99.

1978 report found dramatic losses to Upriver Spring Chinook, with catches dropping from a 1957-1966 average of 79,200 fish to an average of 33,700 for the years 1967-1973. The 1974 fishing season on the main-stem lower Columbia lasted a single day, with 8,400 catches; 1976 and 1977 had no Chinook fishing seasons at all. In June of 1977 the Nez Perce Tribe shut down their fishing on the Rapid River. [133] In Chaney's report, "A Question of Balance," he outlined the grim facts of salmon decline, identifying that "federal water project agencies… have failed to provide implied or promised compensation for fishery losses at their dams." He found "little or no compensation" made for losses caused by the Bonneville, McNary, and The Dalles dams, and no compensation at all for the four lower Snake River dams: Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose, or Lower Granite.[134] Contemporary conservationists call attention to those four dams which Andrus addressed in *Politics Western Style*. Andrus explained how, "during spring runoff," when juvenile salmon have limited time to reach the ocean, those particular dams "don't generate a single kilowatt of energy that is needed in the Northwest."[135] The removal of those key structures could restore salmon to some degree. The plan, which Andrus identified as one that would never see the light of day, garnered support from roughly half the state's population.[136] Andrus' bitter explanation:

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[133] Ed Chaney, "Columbia Basin Salmon and Steelhead Report," p. 2, 4, 5, July 29, 1977, Number 5. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 7.
[134] Ed Chaney, "A Question of Balance," pg. 5, November 1978. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 7.
[135] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style,* 105.
[136] Ibid., 108.

too many people in too many states with more Congressional votes than Idaho depend upon those dams for Idahoans to successfully demand the structures' removal.[137]

The lack of political clout contributes to Idahoans' attitudes, but so, too, do other factors. Professor James Aho suggested that while poverty contributes, isolation, more than economics or politics, impacts Idahoan character. In a telling analysis of Idaho's anti-federal attitudes, he went as far as to identify Southeastern Idaho as "a Mecca of income tax non-compliance," citing the 1970s tax seminars of Marvin Cooley as part of that problem. Cooley, along with LDS author and Idaho Congressman George Hansen (whose area best-seller *To Harass Our People* compared the IRS to Egyptian slave-holders), garnered followers throughout the Rocky Mountain region.[138] In southern Idaho, particularly Southeastern Idaho, the LDS church also contributes to Idahoan anti-federal attitudes. Outside of Utah, Southeastern Idaho claims the highest concentration of Mormons, their influence so marked that the region shares much closer ties to Utah than the rest of Idaho.[139] The John Birch Society, a conservative group known for its anti-Communism stance, recruited Mormons so actively that church leader Ezra Taft Benson declared "the John Birch Society is the most effective non-church organization in our fight against creeping socialism and Godless Communism." Indeed, Benson's own son, Reed, served as the John Birch Society coordinator for the state of Utah, and Benson himself advised two Pocatellans to join the society. They, in turn, organized "one of the

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[137] Cecil Andrus, interview, Idaho Oral History Center, Boise, ID, 12/9/2008.
[138] Aho, *The Politics of Righteousness,* 39-40.
[139] Weatherby and Stapilus, *Governing Idaho,* 9, 23.

largest and most effective Birch chapters in Idaho" whose activities Reed Benson coordinated.[140]

LDS teachings, from the church's earliest days, made a powerful distinction between the Constitution and the government. The unique brand of Mormon constitutionalism and the patriotism of the John Birch Society allowed both groups to share the same values, goals, and members. As Aho describes, "patriots who happened to be Mormon… freely appropriated Church paraphernalia and teachings to further their own political ends."[141] The Mormon version of constitutionalism and the fundamentalist views of "Christian Identity" fused to create an Idahoan sense of Christian Patriotism that, if not a factor that creates state-wide racism, yet fueled state-wide favoritism for whiteness, Protestantism, and anti-establishment attitudes.[142] Gary Allen, speech writer for Alabama governor George Wallace, belonged to the John Birch Society. Ezra Taft Benson thought everyone should read Allen's book *None Dare Call it Conspiracy*.[143] In his efforts to explain Idaho identity, Aho attributes Idahoans' tendency to mobilize right-wing extremist groups not from an abundance of religious zeal or even a lack of education, but from the isolation of Idaho's geography, the estrangement of rural communities from mainstream society.[144]

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[140] Aho, *The Politics of Righteousness,* 114-117.
[141] LDS faith, while maintaining that Mormons should "obey the law of the land" considers the American Constitution a pure principle imperiled by "unreasonable and unprincipled men" who have thus corrupted U.S. government. Aho, *The Politics of Righteousness,* 121-123.
[142] Ibid., 56-57.
[143] Ibid., 126.
[144] Ibid., 137.

While the impact of the LDS faith reaches as far back into Idaho history as the earliest days of irrigated farming, another group had staked their claim in the desert earlier still. That group, and the dreams they carried with them, left an imprint as deep and lasting as that made by agriculture. Mining, Idaho's first industry, had a darker legacy than memories of prospectors and pick-axes. By the post-war era, dredge-mining threatened not only water quality, but fishing and tourism opportunities. Seth Bierstedt argued in a 1951 session of the state senate that tourism could eventually yield more profit than mining, admonishing his fellow Idahoans that "you all know how these dredges leave nothing but desolation and waste behind them."[145] Mining had developed a bad enough reputation that with the White Clouds controversy, Senator Church saw that "a battleline has been drawn between those who demand unrestricted mining and those who want no mining at all. Given the circumstances, neither position is realistic." He stressed that a middle ground could serve both sides, while bringing mining under some degree of control for "somehow, mining has retained a preferred status, its claims taking precedence over all others."[146] Certainly that held true in Kellogg, where the Bunker Hill company's legacy lingers as a Superfund blight on Idaho memory.

Even while praising Andrus as a fine Interior Secretary, an *Idaho Statesman* 1976 editorial recalled that Andrus "was cautious in imposing air quality regulations on the Bunker Hill smelter, perhaps too cautious."[147] As scholar Katherine Aiken wrote in her

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[145] "Senate Blocks Bill to Set Dredging Rule," *The Idaho Statesman,* 3/8/1951.
[146] "White Clouds would get new protection in Senate N.R. A. Bill," Senator Frank Church, *Washington Roundup,* September 1969. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 1, Folder 9.
[147] "Fine Choice for Interior Post," *The Idaho Statesman,* 12/20/1976.

book *Idaho's Bunker Hill: The Rise and Fall of a Great Mining Company, 1885-1981,* in August of 1974 physicians from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) found that ninety-nine percent of the children living within a mile of the Bunker Hill smelter had lead poisoning. In that same year the Idaho State Department of Environmental Control discovered that the area's lead levels had increased by a factor of four in two years. However, northern Idaho's economy relied so heavily upon mining jobs that, Aiken wrote, "Kellogg city officials expressed indignation about the department's interference, and the Bunker Hill Company fought efforts to have the Centers for Disease Control… conduct a study."[148] Aiken's work, which offers a stark account of the pollution caused by mining in Kellogg, emphasizes the social and economic needs that Bunker Hill met in Kellogg. *Idaho's Bunker Hill* explores the symbiotic relationship between company and community, and how company leaders employed Idahoan insecurities and anti-federal viewpoints in their attempt to thwart the regulations that eventually shut Bunker Hill down. Aiken includes contemporary issues still facing Kellogg and the surrounding area, making clear the connection between environmental past and environmental present, and the political forces responsible for both.

Bunker Hill provides a powerful example of Idahoans' complex and tragic relationship with their environment. Though they would vote their Governor into office in defense of wilderness, they would also resist state officials' efforts to safeguard their health, and that of their children. Idahoans did value their health, safety, and wilderness

[148] Katherine G. Aiken, *Idaho's Bunker Hill: The Rise and Fall of a Great Mining Company, 1885-1981* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 182-183.

but, particularly in rural areas, they valued their jobs more. Jobs offered security and staved off fears that safety regulations and clean water could not assuage. Bunker Hill executives thwarted unions, fed workers' fears, and even gave employees company time in which to write letters to state senators, voicing complaints against the discomforts of safety measures (such as bulky coveralls and protective respirators), and expressing their anger that the federal government had interfered with their work attire. One company official, Jack W. Kendrick, told workers "government interference with virtually every aspect of our personal and business lives continues unabated at huge cost with little or no apparent benefit." Between 1965 and 1981, six million pounds of lead had poured out of Bunker Hill's smelter stacks. An anonymous letter to government officials, a plea for help, described how "the whole valley from Burke and Mullan to Couer d'Alene, a distance of 60 miles, the whole water source is contaminated beyond help… there isn't a fish for 50 of the 60 miles in the main stream." The letter, which went on at length, ended with: "the only thing that grows here is the undertaker's business and the graveyard."[149]

Bunker Hill jobs, necessary for workers with few other places to apply for work, proved a serious loss when the company closed in 1981. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, Idaho's mining industry lost two thousand jobs.[150] Kellogg lost eighty percent of its tax base.[151] Even with the restrictions that eventually closed Bunker Hill, Idaho's wealthy industrial moguls had enjoyed the freedom afforded by the state officials'

[149] Aiken, *Idaho's Bunker Hill,* 110, 193-194, 203.
[150] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style*, 172.
[151] Aiken, *Idaho's Bunker Hill,* 208.

reluctance to upset citizens by eliminating needed (if hazardous) jobs. Bunker Hill's company president told a reporter, "people are sick of the government telling us what is good for us… I make it a point to never wear a seatbelt, and I get a great deal of satisfaction out of it."[152] That sort of rhetoric, though steeped in ignorance, offered precisely the brand of bitterness that struck a chord with the average Idahoan. Bunker Hill's CEO employed the same tactic when he wrote to Steve Symms warning that the government legislation that shut down Bunker Hill "will surely result in the loss of our economic freedom, and when it does, loss of our political freedom will soon follow."[153] Other industrialists offered evidence of similar disregard for Idaho's environment and citizens. In 1970 Jack Simplot said, "we've known for 25 years that we have to do something about air pollution, but nobody made us do it."[154] Not only industrial, but nuclear waste, has been foisted upon the people of Idaho, people so in need of jobs that they would not turn down the Idaho National Laboratory (INL). As Bob Alvarez of the Environmental Policy Institute said of the Snake River aquifer: "We were told it would take a million years for the plutonium dumped in the soil to migrate to the water table. In fact, it took less than twenty years."[155] Southeastern Idahoans still look upon the INL, one of the area's largest employers, with favor. INL provided jobs for Southeastern

[152] Aiken, *Idaho's Bunker Hill*, 188.
[153] Ibid., 201.
[154] Neil, *To the White Clouds,* 184.
[155] Charles Etlinger, "Nuclear Wastes on the Desert," *The Idaho Statesman,* 10/30/1988.

Idahoans at a time when Idaho would otherwise have lost population for want of employment opportunities.[156]

While arguments for the value of tourism or the defense of mother nature frequently fell upon a disinterested rural audience, concerns related to loss of big game or damage to prime fishing spots garnered more attention. Idahoans would readily complain against preserving anything for the benefit of wealthy vacationers, or cry abject poverty at the thought of logging restrictions, but mining, an industry known not only for its destructive capabilities but also its tendency to pollute, met more and more resistance as time went on. Dredges, especially, met with public protest. Idahoans cried out that dredges ruined fishing spots, tainted irrigation water and cost them permanent sources of tourism dollars.[157] Sadly, those who sought to profit from Idaho's resources often displayed a solid comprehension for Idahoan bias. Bunker Hill's president called preservation efforts "demagoguery" and insisted that the only beauty possessed by wilderness was the profit people could attain from it.[158] Pollution tended to go unchecked in postwar Idaho. By July 1, 1981, Idaho was the only state with no program to monitor or protect air quality.[159]

Idaho's Department of Health and Welfare, responsible not only for protecting Idahoans from pollution health hazards but for convincing Idahoans that health risks

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[156] Stapilus, *Paradox Politics*, 63.
[157] Neil, *To the White Clouds,* 108.
[158] Ibid., 122.
[159] "Legislature ends state air quality regulation," *The Idaho Citizen.* Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 10, Folder 4.

existed, struggled with the apathy and ignorance of Idaho's citizens. Though agriculture degraded 3,167 of 3,794 miles of streams in Southwestern Idaho, Gwen Burr of the Department of Health and Welfare found that "we don't get complaints… the expectation's just not there."[160] Idaho's history of acquiescing to agriculture accentuates Idahoans' tendency to mind their own business, which compounds the problems of pollution. What in the average Idahoan's experience would suggest that he or she might have higher expectations? The malaise that grips most Idahoans is by no means absolute and at times, such as in the fight for Hells Canyon, it loosened enough to allow for motion, for change. Idaho attorney Bruce Bowler observed that calls to action were heeded, though those calls came from outside the state. "It was easterners who came to us and said 'hey, you idiots, are you going to let them *do* this to you?' Funny, you had to go clear across the state to find people willing to stick up for the protection of Idaho."[161]

Outdoorsmen had long set the tone for Idaho's preservation efforts, starting with their quarrel with grazers. From the hunter's standpoint, cattle ate grass that should, instead, sustain big game animals.[162] The outdoor enthusiast groups proved an ironic but invaluable ally of conservationists, as when Ted Trueblood identified groups that supported the River of No Return Wilderness Council: Friends of the Earth, The National Rifle Association (NRA), National Wildlife Federation, The Wilderness Society, Federation of Fly Fisherman, American Rivers Conservation Council, Idaho Wildlife Federation, Idaho Alpine Club, Hells Canyon Preservation Council, and the Greater

[160] Palmer, *The Snake River,* 186.
[161] Ibid., 212.
[162] Neil, *To the White Clouds,* 81.

Sawtooth Preservation Council.[163] While Friends of the Earth might normally find fault with the philosophies of the NRA, in protecting wilderness they found common cause. Bowler wrote in support of the Sawtooth National Park, claiming, "We wildlife people… make up a large portion of our citizenry." In Bowler's view, anyone who enjoyed the outdoors, from full-blown environmentalist to weekend fisherman, belonged in that group. While industrialists insisted that a Sawtooth National Park would stand in the way of economic opportunity, Bowler insisted otherwise. "The material benefits to Idaho are obvious, and would, of course, exceed by far all future combined benefits that might result from permitted mining, grazing, and lumbering in the region."[164] Frank Church, in his conservation efforts, won Idahoan favor by speaking of Upper Priest Lake being "as wild and natural as God made it."[165]

Unfortunately, even as some discovered a new appreciation for the wilderness, many who lived adjacent to its abundance were best suited to take it for granted. Half a century after *The Idaho Statesman* criticized the misuse of Shoshone Falls, it ran an article criticizing the federal Wilderness Act bill which would "lock up and 'save' some of this country's 'wilderness' area" that, in 1960 seemed a pointless endeavor when "it's going to be a long, long time before this country runs short of wilderness."[166] Another uniquely Idaho facet to this history of contradictory attitudes springs from Idaho's overwhelmingly rural nature. Professors Thomas Alexander and Jessie Embry, in a

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[163] Ted Trueblood, "Unique Wilderness Threatened."
[164] Bruce Bowler, "Why a Sawtooth National Park," Bonneville Sportsmen's Association Conservation Clinic, March 11, 1960. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 1, Folder 9.
[165] Neil, *To the White Clouds,* 152.
[166] "Megolopolis and Wilderness," *The Idaho Statesman,* 9/13/1961.

historiography of 20th century Idaho and Utah, found that Idaho developed major cities later than other states.[167] Even in the present day, almost twenty percent of Idaho's population reside in counties so under-populated they qualify as frontier counties.[168] Rural citizens in particular, many with families reaching back to the state's early settlement, display resentment and resistance to outside influences. Idaho's reputation for disliking outsiders manifests itself in its approach to the environment, culminating in a combination of possessiveness and resentment. The 1936 creation of the Sun Valley resort area raised a cry against tourists "overwhelming our primitive country" while a simultaneous letter-to-the-editor demand called for utilization of more forest land since national parks served only to the "benefit of New York millionaires." That perennial warning, which Idahoans of successive generations employed, suggested that Idaho's environment, whether for conservation or for profit, should serve only Idahoans.[169]

In 1964 political reporter Jon Margolis wrote that America "was now rich enough, educated enough, and sufficiently at leisure (so that) for the first time in the nation's history, there were more people who wanted to enjoy the public land than to make money off of it."[170] It was a sentiment that Senator Frank Church would echo in 1972, that "if we work together, we may not only manage to save the best that is left in Idaho; we

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[167] Thomas G. Alexander and Jessie L. Embry, "Toward a Twentieth-Century Synthesis: The Historiography of Utah and Idaho," in *The Pacific Historical Review,* Vol. 50, No. 4 (1981): 483.
[168] "Pacific Northwest Region," National Network of Libraries of Medicine, (University of Washington, Seattle, July 2007), http://nnlm.gov/pnr/characteristics/idaho.html. (Accessed 1/24/2009).
[169] Neil, *To the White Clouds,* 52-53.
[170] Ewert, *The Conversion of Senator Frank Church,* 64.

might even manage to make Idaho a better place in which to live."[171] Efforts to appease myriad groups desiring to use public lands resulted in the philosophy of multiple use, which largely failed to appease anyone. Ted Trueblood described multiple use as "a verbal dodge of the United States Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, that actually means, 'First we road and log it, then you can have what's left.'"[172] Or, as Andrus put it, "Have you ever seen anyone have a picnic in an open-pit mine?!"[173] The Idaho Conservation League produced pamphlets extolling the virtues of Idaho's outdoors, including "wilderness waters Idaho agriculture and feeds Idaho livestock" in an effort to unite the oft-divided forces of agriculture and conservation.[174] Frank Church, in a 1969 news release, reminded constituents that the White Clouds constituted only "3 to 4 percent of the total area of our state" and that "If we fail to preserve them, no sanctuary will be left for those who must occasionally escape from the cars and the crowds."[175]

Church displayed a savvy on par with Idaho Power's; yet where Idaho Power had played to Idahoans' fears, Church appealed to their dignity. He chose his words with subtle care, seeking to alienate neither conservationists nor laborers. He mailed postcard ballots asking Idahoan opinions on the proposed Sawtooth Wilderness National Park. Church's success lay partly in the service he did for Idaho's shared resources, but more so in his regard for people who had not enjoyed the privilege of their leaders'

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[171] Ewert, *The Conversion of Senator Frank Church,* 131.
[172] Ted Trueblood, "Unique Wilderness Threatened."
[173] Cecil Andrus, interview, Idaho Oral History Center, Boise, ID, 12/9/2008.
[174] Idaho Conservation League, "Idaho's Wilderness: How much Less?" Ted Trueblood Collection MSS 89, Box 8, Folder 6.
[175] Frank Church, "News Release from Frank Church," 7/22/1969. Fred Hutchison Papers, MSS 124, Box 4, Folder 119.

attentiveness. He spoke of impact of tourism, in that "it would prove to be of immense economic value to all of central Idaho" if Idahoans protected the Sawtooths from the timber, mining, and ranching industries. Church also showed a caution that constituents could view as respect in calling, initially, not for a park but a study. Idahoans, who balked at everything from actual law to greater-good policies, showed interest and support for Church's proposal.

Church won his triumphs through a keen understanding of compromise. While preservationists called for an unyielding approach, Church made amendments to the Wilderness Bill in an attempt to mollify the proponents of industry. Though wilderness advocates criticized such concessions, Church knew that cooperating with the powerful forces of industry would achieve far more than endless contention. "I hope the success of creating a permanent wilderness system," he wrote to Bill Duff in June of 1961, "will not be jeopardized by a failure on the part of its advocates to recognize that some give and take is necessary."[176] He understood, too, how to appeal to constituents, that their sense of duty would cause them to heed calls for fairness when reminded that they had grown up with the privilege of knowing the wilds and that their grandchildren deserved the same opportunity to hunt, fish, and explore. He bolstered the heritage value of conservation by reminding Idahoans that "wilderness areas will become a mighty magnet for the tourist trade… few industries have as much potential for us."[177] In a political flyer opposing the Hell's Canyon National Recreational Area, Church circled the line "The Snake River is a

[176] Ewert, *The Conversion of Senator Frank Church,* 32.
[177] Ibid., 34.

working river. It must keep people working." An arrow from the margin links the circled text to Church's hand-written comment: "what is wrong with the economy now?? It seems to me that we have the best of two worlds. Why wreck a good thing?"[178] In jotting down his reaction, Church identified the tactic of the opposition: using insecurity to sway Idaho sentiment.

The environmental and policy changes that swept through the nation's collective attitude in the 1960s led to environmental legislation that served the greater good. By the 1970s a better understanding of pollution and health hazards led to the creation of the Occupational and Safety Health Association (OSHA). In 1970 former Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall said "in the past, the myth of endless resources blinded us to the horrible results of reckless mining practices on our public lands," an admission that the previous generation would not have thought, much less shared.[179] The popularity of recreation in wildlife refuges had grown apparent by the 1970s, Fish and Wildlife Service reported (for 1969) 700,000 visits to refuges by hunters, and 4,600,000 by fishermen, and 11,000,000 for swimming, boating, and other activities. In 1969 Idaho's fishing alone saw the purchase of 252,200 resident licenses and 177,339 non-resident ones. Hunting in Idaho that same year ended with 458,204 total licenses. The numbers, of licenses for

[178] Frank Church, commentary on anti-H.B. 30 flyer. Frank Church Papers, MSS 56, Box 69, Folder 7.
[179] Ewert, *The Conversion of Senator Frank Church,* 112-113.

either hunters or fishers, spoke clearly of the social and recreational value of wilderness.[180]

Though the idea of wild rivers would find its way into legislation in the 1960s, even early settlers like Annie Pike Greenwood had recognized the loss of grandeur in rivers dammed and diverted, in "the spillway where the Jerome Canal begins to voice the protest of its father, the Snake River, at being forced by man into the degradation of common labor."[181] In 1973, a River of No Return Wilderness Council sought improved protection of wilderness areas and went to Forest Service field hearings, backed with the conviction that "Most Idahoans cherish the wilderness and we were supported by more than 600 letters from all over America." Of the River of No Return wilderness area, Trueblood felt that "There is probably no better spot in the Lower 48 to observe native wildlife in undisturbed, natural surroundings."[182] In the midst of Idahoans developing a deeper appreciation for their wild lands, forces outside the state would lend a spark to ignite the anti-federalism that had smoldered since the days of settlement. Federal land policies, disputes of management responsibility, and an energy crisis coalesced to create a rebellion of sorts, and Idahoans, for a time, joined in.

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[180] "Hunting is Popular on National Wildlife Refuges," Department of the Interior news release, 3/15/1970. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 7, Folder 6.
[181] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 57.
[182] Ted Trueblood, "Unique Wilderness Threatened."

CHAPTER FOUR – SAGEBRUSH REBELLION

Though Idaho's neighboring states also bear resentment toward the federal government, anti-federal sentiment and its impact upon the Idaho's history and identity shows deep and early roots. Bitter feelings surfaced early, apparent in politics and public sentiment from the 19th century onward. In 1899 Senator Weldon Heyburn complained that Idaho had so few marketable resources that the government should not interfere with timber access.[183] Whatever literal truth lay in Heyburn's protests, his viewpoint remains quintessentially Idahoan: that of the victim, bullied by federal policy and without options in the desert's lack of profitable natural resources. Not only resentment over natural resources festered at the turn of the 20th century, but anger among the irrigators over federal policy. "The Government is the friend and helper of the farmer," wrote Annie Pike Greenwood, with sarcasm so fierce it still smolders on the page, "Market our crops for us? Heavens, no! Why, woman, that's socialism!"[184]

Idaho, no matter how fertile its volcanic soil, could not command enough political power to influence agricultural markets or improve the lives of its rural citizens. In time, the dream and gamble of family farming gave way to industrial-scale operations, such as the massive sugar beet production that met the needs of factories like U & I that

[183] Neil, *To the White Clouds,* 3.
[184] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 46.

supported the inclusion of immigrants into the Western landscape because they needed workers.[185] The once close-knit and often deeply religious communities that typified the myth of Western settlement changed, but Idaho did not lose its foundation, its rural culture, which set the tone for political and social decisions throughout the 20th century. The resentment directed at federal government, the militant control of irrigation water, and the tendency to let religion govern rural life remained as part of Idaho's settlement legacy. The disparity, too, of federal and state control of public lands made them prefer state policy. While federal mandates emphasized multiple use, state policy supported profitable endeavors like timber production.[186] Idaho-elected individuals made state decisions that Idahoans accepted more peaceably than those of federal government officials. All these factors contributed to Idahoan acceptance of the Sagebrush Rebellion.

The Hells Canyon controversy had made apparent the value of Idaho water, causing water master Lynn Crandall to voice suspicions over the government's "drive to take over the northwest for public power."[187] Not only issues with expanding energy development, but the principle of multiple use appeared as yet another federal attempt to increase its influence on public lands. The Bureau of Land Management found itself in the unenviable position of handling multiple-use policies, instituting more and more rules in their effort to appease more and more users.[188] Some part of Western frustration stemmed from the environmental fervor of the late 1960s and early 1970s that, as scholar

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[185] Fiege, *Irrigated Eden,* 118, 136, 139.
[186] Tomas M. Koontz, *Federalism in the Forest: National versus State Natural Resource Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 123.
[187] Brooks, *Public Power, Private Dams*, 53.
[188] R. McGregor Cawley, *Federal Land – Western Anger* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 23, 26.

Richard White suggested, sent "the basic message that modern work is the enemy of nature."[189] Idealistic notions of nature's inherent value seemed like hypocrisy by the end of the 1970s when demand for natural resources increased. Conservation looked like an eastern convention foisted upon the Western states and enforced by government regulation. Then the energy crisis preempted the legislation meant to protect Western environs, to meet eastern demands. To Westerners, the crisis, on the heels of the environmental movement, smacked of preservation shielding natural resources only until the rest of the nation needed them. Westerners could not use wilderness for their own profit yet easterners could call that same wilderness into service for Americans who had never set foot on western soil. As a better grasp of science led to a clearer understanding of nature's complexity, the need for a wise management of resources grew more and more apparent. During the Hells Canyon controversy, the upper Columbia fishery lost half its sockeye salmon and steelhead population after the government took charge of it.[190] While states might prove as ill-equipped to manage and solve such problems, Westerners felt wholly justified that their vested interest made them better managers of their public land and water.

Western land, hotly contested on history's stage, had seen Caucasians fueled by conquest's fire battle with Native Americans, and had seen cattlemen show every disrespect to irrigators who fenced the acreage the cattlemen considered open range.

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[189] Richard White, "'Are you an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?' Work and Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature,* ed. William Cronon, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1995), 180.
[190] Brooks, *Public Power, Private Dams,* 91.

Sheepherders had added a new dimension to the contention. "The banks are owned and controlled by the sheepmen," asserted Annie Pike Greenwood in the matter of hay prices. She blamed the low prices (which benefited the sheepherders) on the state and federal government, declaring that "the sheepmen were stealing our lives from us."[191]

Neighbors in the West, so often deeply unneighborly, fought with each other, with state officials, and with government officials. They fought until fighting had become second nature. Long before the Sagebrush Rebellion, Idahoans had demanded "that the state of Idaho be permitted to have entire jurisdiction over territory within the boundaries of the state not in actual or necessary use of the federal government."[192] That demand had taken place in 1910, and Western tempers had smoldered all along, but the numerous Acts of the 1960s kindled contentions to full blaze: the Wilderness Act of 1964, Highway Beautification Act of 1965, the Water Quality Control Act of 1965, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the Air Quality Act of 1967, the National Trails System Act of 1968, and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. Positive and beneficial as all those Acts proved, Westerners felt that politicians imposed the Acts upon them, distant politicians who did not understand their ways of life.

Prior to those Acts and the advent of multiple use policies, Westerners had only the federal government to contend with on the bulk of public lands; from the 1970s onward, they had both federal and state agencies regulating their activities, plus citizen conservation groups calling for protection of lands, resources, and wildlife once free for

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[191] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 140-141.
[192] "And Now It's Conservation of Scenery, What Next?," *The Idaho Statesman,* 2/15/1911.

the taking.[193] Beneficial-seeming colossuses such as the Bonneville Power Administration reached "into the economy and environment of the Pacific Northwest as few other federal agencies do anywhere else."[194] In the Pacific Northwest in particular, the federal government had already worn out its dubious welcome.

In his 1993 book, *Federal Land, Western Anger: The Sagebrush Rebellion and Environmental Politics,* author R. McGregor Cawley explained the causes of the Sagebrush Rebellion. For Cawley, the Rebellion served to illustrate a breakdown of communication between the state and federal agencies, as well as a lack of communication between either party and public land users. He included investigation into Nevadan problems (Nevada possessing a unique situation where much federal land and few material resources exacerbated citizens' angst), and explored the frustrations of both eastern and Western Americans caused by changing public land policies and the 1970s energy crisis. Cawley included legislation, public reaction, and direct quotes from politicians to illustrate the depth of the problem and to provide an insightful explanation for anger and behavior of Westerners during the 1970s and early 1980s.

The call for wise management complicated matters. Public lands, set aside in the West to establish the sorts of open spaces lacking in the east, intended to serve a diverse population, a population full of conflicting aims when it came to deciding how to use those lands. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 displeased farmers and stockmen who viewed the Act as land control that could progress into heightened

[193] Cawley, *Federal Land – Western Anger*, 28, 76.
[194] Barker, *Saving All the Parts*, 88.

control over water. Combined with the possibility of water diversions to California and Arizona, the new Act aligned Idaho farmers and cattlemen with the Sagebrush Rebellion.[195] The idea of multiple use intended for combinations of agriculture, industry, and recreation to take place without any one of those categories precluding the other. As Idahoan J.M. Neil wryly noted, "multiple use is fly-fishing downstream from a dredging operation… casting for fish and catching potato peelings."[196] Arguably, multiple use could provide for an area having a primary and a secondary use, where the primary use took precedence while still allowing the secondary use to take place. Recreational vehicles could access roads constructed for logging; reservoirs that held irrigation water allowed for public boating and fishing. The theory failed in many cases, such as where logging destroyed game habitat and rendered an area useless to sportsmen. Mining poisoned lakes and streams, killed fish or made them unfit for consumption. Reservoirs flooded the valleys and meadows that once attracted hikers and mountain bikers. Irrigation and farming practices destroyed riparian habitat and contaminated groundwater supplies. The possibility of multiple use went unfulfilled when the area's primary use exhausted the local environment.

Multiple use, though meant to provide the public a measure of fairness, led the way for multiple conflict. After the environmental protection fervor of the 1960s, the oil embargo and energy crisis of the 1970s ratcheted environmental concerns lower on the nation's list of priorities. Easterners supporting affordable energy and Westerners

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[195] Stapilus, *Paradox Politics*, 36.
[196] Neil, *To the White Clouds*, xi.

needing jobs chose to benefit from further (multiple) use of public lands.[197] The responsibility of coordinating the multiple use principle fell to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Providing for so many interests naturally required many rules; Westerners in particular resented rules, no matter how much benefit those regulations promised to provide.[198] Yielding to regulations, no matter how much it might serve the greater good, put Westerners in a position of losing status and security and gave the impression that Western lives and Western resources fell subject to the whims of those with more social and political power.

The Sagebrush Rebellion, with "the name and the idea [that] had a lot of appeal to all the Archie Bunker types," began in Nevada.[199] Understandably, Nevada held a position unique even among its public-land dominated neighbors. Both Idaho and Utah contain over sixty percent federal land.[200] Nevada, however, tops out just shy of eighty percent.[201] Where a state like Idaho, rich with wild rivers, anadromous fish, and dense forests, can benefit greatly through federal policies that preserve public land, Nevadans valued such protection far less. Federal land designation could protect Idaho's prime elk habitat, which both sportsmen and preservationists appreciated. Federal land designation in Nevada confined towns so narrowly that it took an act of Congress, which no one

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[197] Cawley, *Federal Land – Western Anger*, 57.
[198] Ibid., 26.
[199] Ted Trueblood, "Idaho's public lands threatened," 6/15/1980. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 11, Folder 6.
[200] In Idaho the Bureau of Land Management manages 11,946,276 acres while the Forest Service manages 20,390,046 acres. "The Uses of the Public Lands," November 1980. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 9, Folder 10.
[201] "U.S. General Services Administration Table," Bureau of Land Management (Department of the Interior). www.blm.gov/natacq/plas98/98PL1-3.PDF. (Accessed 9/15/2008).

appreciated, to construct a baseball diamond for Little League games.[202] Nevada faced more constraints of federal land management than did other states and saw less of the tangible benefits in pristine hiking trails, prime hunting grounds, or tourist-welcoming fishing spots.

Westerners, many from rural towns with few lucrative employment opportunities, considered it an economic hardship to lose the mining and logging jobs that kept them from even less desirable professions. Arguments for environmental preservation, coupled with the genuine value Westerners ascribed to their enjoyment of public lands, carried some weight in the West. Problematically, the environmental fervor of the late 1960s clashed with the energy crisis in the early 1970s. Lyndon Johnson, in 1965, had extolled the virtues of conservation. "Certainly no one would hazard a national definition of beauty," Johnson told Congress in a special message on Conservation and Restoration. "But we do know that nature is nearly always beautiful. We do, for the most part, know what is ugly."[203] The notion that Americans should protect, appreciate, and share nature fell by the wayside when the call came for cheaper energy. The West, accepting only grudgingly that their public lands had a higher use than profit, then heard that they could ignore such lofty principles if the federal government deemed it necessary. Little wonder that Nevadan resentment festered into a full-fledged rebellion. Neighboring states caught the Rebellion's attitude like a virus. The *Salt Lake Tribune* ran a series of articles focused on reactions to the Sagebrush Rebellion, one that included a photo of Utah

[202] Cawley, *Federal Land – Western Anger*, 66.
[203] Ibid., 27.

Senator Ivan M. Matheson alongside his menacing prediction: "Violence… it'll come." The possibility of violence notwithstanding, petulance proved the order of the day, as another article offered: "The United States owns 66 percent of Utah and virtually all energy developments involve federal land."[204] Westerners thought they, personally, might capitalize on public land energy development, though they did not articulate how. A lack of concrete plans, however, did not diminish their eagerness to condemn the government for keeping them from the attempt. Violence did erupt in January 1981 between Claude Dallas and two Fish and Game conservation officers. Whether or not Dallas' actions reflected angst related to the Sagebrush Rebellion, "the murder of two Fish and Game Department conservation officers seemed to have increased public awareness of the problems of enforcement of big game laws."[205]

While the philosophy of the Sagebrush Rebellion resonated with many Western Americans, Idahoans in particular identified with the maverick tone in the call for public land management reform. Ads supporting the Rebellion demanded to know: "Can states be their own boss when the Federal Government owns 96 % of Alaska, 87% of Nevada, 64% of Idaho, 53% of Oregon?"[206] Besides their anti-federal tendencies, Idahoans had a long history of open disdain for rules of any sort, state, federal, or local. From the earliest days of settlement, cattlemen "cut… fences with wire-clippers, which they

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[204] "Antagonism to Federal Agencies Building" and "Game's 'Fixed' in Washington: Utah Plays Against Stacked Deck in Land Policy," *Salt Lake Tribune,* August 1978. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 11, Folder 1.
[205] "Wildlife, conservation issues surface in legislature," *The Idaho Citizen.* Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 10, Folder 4.
[206] "What's wrong with this story? Everything," political ad. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 11, Folder 6.

carried for the purpose" and allowed cattle to trample crops, eat stored hay, and endanger the livelihood of farmers.[207] Cattlemen behaved as though they lived well above the law, much as irrigators would later do. Flouting regulations, anyone's regulations, had become an integral part of Idaho life. Annie Pike Greenwood recounted that, "In hunting season they loaded up their cars with bootleg liquor, to serve for refreshment on the way, and with utmost boldness hunted as they would upon our posted farm."[208]

Criticism for federal government came from both fronts, against the government for interfering too much and, conversely, for doing too little. The *Idaho State Journal* bemoaned the state's situation in air pollution control, that Idaho could not afford to develop air pollution standards and could only rely on the government and, therefore, that help might never arrive.[209] The government suffered the unenviable position of displeasing Idahoans no matter what they did, or did not do. It suffered, additionally, for the role Idaho had cast for it: the perpetual villain. "The West must be forever vigilant that the federal government does not use energy as a pretext to override state water law," warned Senator Church.[210] Never far from Idahoans' minds lay that all-too-genuine fear that the government would violate their water rights: when government united with the cause of energy, what could Idaho do? The Sagebrush Rebellion, a phenomenon that began in Nevada and refused to stay there, stirred Idahoan fear and anger from the mid-1970s into the 1980s. Politician Vern Ravenscroft railed against the government under

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[207] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 29-30.
[208] Ibid., 176.
[209] Neil, *To the White Clouds,* 175.
[210] "Water-rights battle anticipated," The Idaho Statesman, 8/31/1979.

such headlines as "Meddling bureaucrats cheat Idaho farmers out of a living." Not only farmers, but also sheep raisers joined Ravenscroft in his ire. By the end of 1979, 1,400 members of the Idaho Wool Growers Association officially supported the Sagebrush Rebellion. Cattlemen, too, rallied behind the Rebellion from "a result of their hatred building during the 1970s, for the BLM," Ted Trueblood explained, which stemmed from their belief that environmentalists had taken over the agency.[211]

Steve Symms, who had allied with the John Birch Society, campaigned in 1980 under the promise to "get government off our backs," an assurance that resonated with those angry over Sagebrush Rebellion issues, with anti-preservationists embittered by the laws protecting public lands, with Mormons ever-wary of governmental regulations, and with second and third generation farmers who harbored their families' resentment for all things federal.[212] Symms also criticized then-Interior Secretary Andrus' plans to expand the Birds of Prey area, identifying the proposal as "another example of the insensitive treatment Westerners receive from the federal overlords in Washington, D.C." *Overlords.* Symms' word choice would have sounded uproarious if he had not spoken in dead earnest.[213] Larry Craig, who also campaigned in 1980, rallied Idahoans with the militant rhetoric: "Governmental intrusion into the private affairs of people must stop. Destruction of the people's pursuit of free enterprise must stop. Continuing expansion of the government – its size, its rules, its regulations, its deficits, and its edicts – must

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[211] "Sagebrush," *The Idaho Statesman,* 10/26/1980.
[212] Ewert, *The Conversion of Senator Frank Church,* 230.
[213] Rod Gramer, "Andrus acts to expand birds area," *The Idaho Statesman,* 11/25/1980.

stop."[214] Though it sounded paranoid and militant, that sort of rabble-rousing appealed to many Idahoans. The early 1980s, with the Sagebrush Rebellion rekindling Western tempers, House Agricultural Affairs Committee agreed to print the Sagebrush bill that Republican Representative John Brooks felt would send the message that "we're tired of being pushed around by the Eastern Establishment." His sentiment was echoed by Mountain Home resident Dan Kelly who wondered if "the western United States is going to be part of the union or is going to be the property of the union."[215]

Paranoid and petulant as Western attitudes seemed, they had legitimate complaints to lodge. Washington Public Power Supply System's ambitious plans to build five nuclear power plants failed, resulting in two plants and a debt that still takes thirty-three percent of BPA's annual budget. While three percent of the BPA budget goes toward fish and wildlife expenditures, Idaho author Rocky Barker identified the nuclear power plant debacle as "one of the things driving Bonneville [Power] to get every cent it can out of the river." During the 1980s the BPA sold surplus electricity to California at lower rates than they offered to their Pacific Northwest customers, who already paid a price in lost salmon runs.[216] At some point Idaho, with its exploited rivers and its absent fishing opportunities, had every right to ask if, indeed, the BPA did not treat it as property used for the benefit of non-Idahoan customers.

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[214] "Craig enters 1st Congressional District race," *The Idaho Statesman,* 9/3/1980.
[215] Charles Etlinger, "Rebellious bill hopes to wrest land from U.S.," *The Idaho Statesman,* 1/23/1980.
[216] Barker, *Saving All the Parts,* 106.

Senator McClure, during the Sagebrush Rebellion, expressed ideas that revealed the depth of Idahoans' insecurity and anger. Besides agreeing that energy crisis demands endangered Idaho's sovereignty and that easterners treated the West as little more than a playground, McClure said he "thought [Idaho] to be one-third of a state… because we only have one-third of the state in private ownership." For that reason, McClure asserted, "the rest of the states try to impose their will upon us."[217] Lt. Governor Phil Batt's opinion, that "the government has often treated Gem State natives with contempt," echoed what many Idahoans had felt throughout the generations, whether angry over wartime wheat prices, proposed federal dams, or public land policy.[218] Hotly contended issues, such as the introduction of wolves into Idaho wilderness, resulted in Idahoan bitterness that Cecil Andrus identified as ranchers feeling "left out of the decision-making as well as threatened."[219] The potential literal threat of wolves remained dwarfed by the nameless fears that surrounded big government. When federal programs delivered wolves perceived (albeit mistakenly) as a threat to Idaho public lands, Idahoans interpreted it as a broad threat to all their resources, including water. Idaho's political and economic weaknesses required a dependence on federal assistance that undermined Idahoan confidence.

Special interests saw the chance to make money from public lands, and by igniting the smoldering resentment Westerners harbored against federal policies, the Sagebrush Rebellion spread like wildfire. In 1980 Republican senators and congressmen

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[217] "Q&A with Senator McClure," *The Idaho Statesman,* 1/4/1981.
[218] Phil Batt, "Consider all of the options," *The Idaho Statesman,* 10/18/1979.
[219] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style,* 118.

wrote to Governor Evans on the "legal problem" of Idaho's sovereignty, spurred on by the real estate agencies and other parties who stood to profit by the proposed land transfer.[220] John Brandt, a Nampa resident who worked in both real estate and farm management, criticized those who fought to save public lands "for the Washington bureaucrats" and insisted that "now that people are more informed, many do not want to have the federal government as an absentee landlord anymore." Ignoring a century's worth of evidence to the contrary, Brandt tried to refute preservationist concerns with a claim that "The farmer is perhaps the greatest environmentalist of all."[221]

Conservationist and BLM official Bill Meiners felt that the Rebellion served only the interests of energy and mineral development but that those interests had manipulated cattlemen into supporting them. The cattlemen's stake in the Rebellion, Meiners said, lay only in that ranchers "mostly don't want to have any infringement on the individual's right to go out and do what he damn well pleases with the land regardless of cost."[222] Cawley, in *Federal Land, Western Anger*, identified that environmentalists considered the Rebellion "hysteria and slander supported neither by history nor by facts, but by a thin tissue of lies. It was fueled by greed. Every 'rebel' leader was tied to public-land exploitation."[223]

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[220] James A. McClure, George C. Hansen, and Steve Symms, letter to Governor Evans, 2/4/1980. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 11, Folder 4.
[221] John H. Brandt, "Turn land over to states," 4/4/1981. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 11, Folder 6.
[222] "Sagebrush: Oilmen, miners use ranchers in scheme to exploit land," *The Idaho Statesman,* 10/26/1980.
[223] Cawley, *Federal Land – Western Anger*, 34.

The Rebellion, which began during Carter's administration and lasted into Reagan's, fell under the jurisdiction of two different Secretaries of the Interior. The first, Cecil Andrus, identified the Rebellion as "a manifestation of the frustrations of the bureaucracy either not moving or moving in 2 different directions at the same time," while acknowledging "the Sagebrush Rebellion is also an example of the greed that exists on the part of some who want to own and-or control all the public land."[224] The frustrations went beyond old-fashioned material greed. Pre-energy crisis calls for air quality fell aside as America demanded affordable energy. New Mexico Governor Jerry Apodaca declared, "Let there be no mistake – the West will not sacrifice our greatest assets – our blue skies and clear streams, our unblemished plains and mountains – to an endless national thirst for energy." That sentiment, which reflected the Western Governors' Regional Energy Policy Office's aims to protect Western energy interests, met with disdain from easterners who accused the West of exploiting the energy crisis.[225]

Ronald Reagan appointed the other Interior Secretary who dealt with the Rebellion: James Watt. The federal government, once under the Reagan Administration, proved only too eager to rid itself of the financial burden of managing public lands. Budget details released in 1983 identified unneeded federal property which reflected higher value in private, rather than public, use and listed among other benefits, that the disposal of said lands would reduce federal management costs, free properties for

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[224] "Cecil Andrus: The past, present and future," *The Idaho Statesman,* 10/28/1979.
[225] Cawley, *Federal Land – Western Anger*, 79.

development, and increase local tax bases.[226] Managing public land did cost a great deal; in 1978 public land management cost the Forest Service $100,000,000 more than the revenue brought in by those same lands.[227] Watt, who cared nothing for outdoor recreation himself, saw little value in public lands and eagerly supported the land transfer. Watt's attitude toward preservation fell perfectly in line with a sentiment offered by Idaho's Cattlemen Association, that, in arguing against the National System of Hiking Trails Bill, had offered: "Our modern civilization is not walking-minded, and, therefore, walking trails are certainly impractical."[228] Too often, arguments against the impractical failed to divulge another meaning behind that word, namely *unprofitable.*

The Sagebrush Rebellion met its match in Idaho's outdoor enthusiasts, led by Ted Trueblood. Allied with the environmentally-minded Senator Frank Church, Trueblood launched a grassroots movement called "Save our Public Lands." With a keen understanding of Idahoans' fearful possessiveness, he appealed to them to oppose "making a dollar at the expense of public land."[229] Trueblood, in *Field & Stream* magazine, extolled the virtues of Idaho's great outdoors while reminding hunters and fishers that federal management had given them public lands instead of costly, private game reserves. In the 85th Anniversary edition of *Field & Stream*, Trueblood addressed the value of public lands, "I live in the heart of the most densely populated part of Idaho.

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[226] "Major Themes and Additional Budget Details: Fiscal Year 1983," Executive Office of the President: Office of Management and Budget, p. 258-259. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 10, Folder 9.
[227] W.F. "Bill" Whittom, "Public land 'worthless,'" 11/1/1979. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 11, Folder 6.
[228] Robert M. Henderlider, letter to Frank Church from Idaho Cattlemen's Association, 4/22/66. Frank Church Papers, MSS 56, Box 69, Folder 10.
[229] Neil, *To the White Clouds,* 122.

Yet when I want to hunt deer all I have to do is to drive about 50 miles… and start hunting. Sportsmen in the public-land states take this for granted." As Trueblood explained, Sagebrush Rebels falsely billed public lands as worthless desert; public lands included 261,000 miles of fishing streams, 386,000 acres of fish-producing reservoirs, and roughly five million acres of fish-producing lakes, and sixty-five million acres of waterfowl habitat.[230] Leaders in neighboring states also fought the movement, identifying the Sagebrush Rebellion as the Western version of McCarthyism.[231]

Enough support grew to create the Outdoorsmen for Church group which celebrated Church's environmental efforts and circulated campaign literature exhorting Idahoans to keep Church in office because "Idahoans do not want to sacrifice these long term gains for all the citizens for the short term benefit of a few greedy land speculators masquerading as sagebrush rebels."[232] Church himself identified the Sagebrush Rebellion as "appealing on the surface, [but] a deeper look at the scheme reveals its true purpose, namely to take the land which all of us own together and place it in the hands of special interests." He also reminded Idahoans that administration for public lands in the previous year (1979) had cost $107 million, and that "if the State administered these lands for the use and benefit of us all, the Idaho Legislature would have had to come up with this extra $107 million!" Church knew which approach would work, he knew Idahoans would yield to a call for fairness and feasibility and to a reminder that the threat

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[230] Ted Trueblood, "The Sagebrush Rip-off," *Field & Stream,* March 1981, p. 37. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 10, Folder 9.
[231] Rod Gramer, "Sage Rebellion rapped at rally," *The Idaho Statesman,* 1/27/1981.
[232] Outdoorsmen for Church. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 6.

of special interest (and outsiders) lurked ever-near. He referenced, too, the needs of Idaho stockmen, and that "stockmen would lose their flexible grazing fees and would be forced to pay more for grazing permits." [233] While outdoorsmen and stockmen often took opposing sides, Church united them, however briefly, in repelling the special interests that threatened the status quo. Church acknowledged the power wielded by those interests as well, and the fact that raw materials-based jobs served as a key component of Idaho's economy. When it came to the River of No Return Wilderness bill, he explained that "in the six national forests directly affected by the bill, the overall allowable cut will *increase* by four million board feet when surrounding land is released as a result of this legislation." While stressing that the bill would benefit lumbering, Church reminded Idahoans "that our national forests belong to all – to hunters and fisherman as much as the logging companies; to family campers as much as the mining companies."[234]

Church's success as a Democratic Idaho politician, in a chiefly Republican state, lay in the fact that he believed the federal government had too much power.[235] That belief, however, did not mean that Church would help privatize public lands. It fell to Church to balance the call for conservation with the demands of land users, and protect those in both camps from the threat of the Sagebrush Rebellion. To cattlemen in Challis Church prepared a news release that contained excerpts of a Senate committee report, including a reassurance that "Whenever possible, commitments made by the United

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[233] Senator Frank Church, "Maintaining Idaho's Quality of Life," p. 1, 4, 6, 10/20/1980. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 6.
[234] Frank Church, "Wilderness Bill Means More Wood." *Report to Idaho: From your Senator Frank Church,* March 1980. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 11, Folder 1.
[235] Neil, *To the White Clouds,* 128.

States government, state agencies, or local users should be set in writing and carefully honored."[236] Though Church wanted no part of the Rebellion, he did want to address the concerns and contentions that the Rebellion brought forward.

Support for both Church's and Trueblood's efforts came from outdoor enthusiasts as well as environmentalists. Rathburn and Associates, a Twin Falls Community and Resource Development Services group, wrote to Trueblood offering their assistance to "defeat this overt land rape movement." Rathburn himself added that "I sincerely feel that the 'Sagebrush Rebellion' is the most serious attempt at a land grab since the demise of Chief Joseph. We must at least put up the fight his people did."[237] The *Wall Street Journal* ran a 1979 article by Cecil Andrus (then still Secretary of the Interior) entitled "The Attack on Federal Lands." In it Andrus identified an unexamined facet to the Sagebrush Rebellion and used an Idaho policy as the example. Idaho's constitution called for the highest possible return on state lands to aid the school endowment fund. A transfer of federal lands to state ownership would demand, by state law, the sale or lease of those lands. [238] Sagebrush Rebels had either not known or not considered that side of their rebellion.

The Sagebrush Rebellion question raised by Nevada's Select Committee on Public Lands centered on the high percentage of federally-owned land in Western states:

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[236] Frank Church, News release on Senate Range Bill. Fred Hutchison Papers, MSS 124, Box 14, Folder 16.
[237] Arthur C. Rathburn, letter to Ted Trueblood, 6/11/1980, Ted Trueblood Collection MSS 89, Box 2, Folder 15.
[238] Cecil D. Andrus, "The Attack on Federal Lands," *Wall Street Journal,* 12/5/1979. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 11, Folder 5.

"Is this situation a denial of equal footing with the other states?"[239] Sagebrush Rebels bristled over the suggestion that they did not stand as equals with eastern Americans. In fact, they did not. The simple, sorry truth of the matter remained, that the socially and financially disadvantaged had settled the West. Rather than lay the blame at their grandfathers' doorsteps, Westerners found it more palatable to blame the easterners or, better yet, the government. Long before the advent of Sagebrush Rebels, Idahoans had felt slighted by federal policy and federal officials. Early in the 1890s, civic leaders anticipated the construction of a new federal building in Boise. While Boiseans speculated on what location they preferred for the new building, a government official came, chose the site, and left. As *The Idaho Statesman* observed, "the inability of local leaders to influence, let alone to control, the location of such an important building must have been a chastening experience."[240] Not only that brand of discourtesy, aimed at local political leaders, soured Idahoans' attitudes toward federal government. Greenwood, who wrote eloquently on the slights felt from government policy, told how the government-regulated prices on agricultural goods ruined her family's farm, and the farms of her neighbors. "On election day in 1922 I watched those poverty-stricken farm families… I could see back of them the years of thankless toil, the crops raised at greater cost than the price for which they could be sold… infamous, luxury-loving, self-indulgent Government of these United States! What do you mean by allowing interested profiteers

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[239] "Sagebrush Rebellion Presentation," Nevada Legislature's Select Committee on Public Lands, pg. 6, November 1980. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 8, Folder 11.
[240] "Public Building Gossip," *The Idaho Statesman,* 5/3/1896.

to set the price of wheat below the cost of production and get away with it?"[241] The federal government won no popularity contests, either, for President Carter's 1977 decision to cut nineteen Western water projects that he considered problematic for environmental or safety reasons. As the Western states had suffered a drought in the 1976-1977 season, the timing of that decision only added to Western resentment for federal policy making.[242]

While concerned Westerners in particular battled on behalf of public lands, other worried Americans joined the struggle. Charles Callison, Director of the Public Lands Institute, considered the Sagebrush Rebellion absurd, but feared that if it succeeded, "the best of the public lands will be sold off, leaving the least productive timber and grazing lands for the taxpayers to support."[243] The International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) identified support for the Rebellion as "deep frustration by people who had lost touch with their government" and as "resentment at the arrogance and the distance of the federal government and their inability to deal effectively with it." This followed the IAFWA's declaration of "firm opposition to the large-scale transfer of western Federal lands to the states."[244] As better understanding of the so-called Rebellion spread, Idahoans saw the truth behind its call for Western independence: the privatization of public lands. Outdoor enthusiasts prized public lands, no matter how seemingly over-

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[241] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 394-395.
[242] Cawley, *Federal Land – Western Anger*, 82.
[243] Larry Swisher, "U.S. May put public lands up for sale," *The Idaho Statesman,* 4/18/1982.
[244] International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, letter to U.S. Governmental Members, 11/26/1980 and Resolution No. 5, "Transfers of Federal Lands to the States." Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 8, Folder 11.

managed. One 1978 estimate put recreational visits to public lands at 196 million.[245] Though the notion of freeing themselves from federal policies had initially won over many Westerners, the facts offered up through grassroots efforts and in letters to *The Idaho Statesman*, changed their minds. One such letter, written by Nampa resident Brad Riffel, stressed that public lands belonged to all Americans and that "no permission is needed to set foot on these lands… if this land is sold, it will be off limits for all of us." He urged his fellow Idahoans to "stop this very un-American movement – the rip-off of the American people's land" using words that echoed Trueblood's, and appealing to Idahoans' sense of patriotism and independence.[246]

Naturally, not all Idahoans warmed to Trueblood's campaign. As political writers have identified, "keeping large groups united across a range of issues, however, can be difficult in a state as spread-out as Idaho."[247] With the Sagebrush Rebellion, as with so much else, reactions spread across the spectrum. Some fell prey to what Church identified as a "test-tube case to see if with lies and distortion, they can control the views of the people of Idaho."[248] Some reacted instinctively to suggestions of challenged sovereignty and the tired phrase "lock up." Some, like the infuriated Jack Streeter, representing real estate interests in the Mountain Home area, wrote to Trueblood claiming that public lands equaled federal socialism, suggesting that "there are countries

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[245] Mike Aderhold, "The Sagebrush Rebellion: Who Owns the West?" *Montana Outdoors,* Nov/Dec. 1980, p. 26. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 2, Folder 16.
[246] Brad Riffel, "Heritage of public lands shouldn't be sold, letter to the editor," *The Idaho Statesman,* 3/26/1983.
[247] Weatherby and Stapilus, *Governing Idaho,* 68.
[248] Rod Gramer, "Church raps supports of Sagebrush Rebellion," *The Idaho Statesman,* 10/10/1980.

that don't have private ownership, Russia and Cuba have that kind of arrangement I understand, go visit them for awhile and see how you like it."[249] Streeter, also on the board of directors for the South West Development Association, felt that privately owned land would afford *more* hunting and fishing opportunities. His letter did not mention if his real estate business would also benefit from the privatization of public lands. Some politicians, such as Vern Ravenscroft, opposed the conservation efforts of Carter's administration and Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus' policies, which Ravenscroft deemed, "very, very restrictive, extremely regulating and in some instances uncalled for."[250]

The battle, at least in Idaho, showed few signs of the Sagebrush Rebellion benefitting common people. For many Idahoans the prospect of paying high fees to hunt or fish on private ground was outrageous. As one editorial offered, "our National Forest lands are an incredibly valuable resource now available to everyone. If sold, they will be gone forever."[251] Not only outdoorsmen and conservationists opposed the Rebellion. One Gooding rancher sided against the public land transfer, for he wondered "if this land is handed over to the state, will I still have the use of the public range as I presently do under federal control?"[252] Representatives of Idaho conservation groups wrote to President Reagan, reminding him that public lands belonged to all Americans, not just

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[249] Jack Streeter, letter to Ted Trueblood, 6/6/1980. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 2, Folder 15.
[250] Stapilus, *Paradox Politics*, 45.
[251] "McClure's right, but…" *The Idaho Statesman,* 8/15/1982.
[252] "Sheepman opposes land shift," *The Idaho Citizen.* Ted Trueblood Collection MSS 89, Box 10, Folder 4.

Westerners calling for the transfer, and that "these lands are enormously valuable to the people of the West" beyond their dollar worth to special interests.[253]

Idahoans' initial rage over a suggested affront their sovereignty cooled when they encountered reminders of their public land's worth. Trueblood's article, "The Best Thing Around Boise" invited Boiseans to explore their public lands, to "drive out in almost any direction, you'll wind up on it. It's yours, make yourself at home… we call it 'government land,' but it isn't. It's our land." He described the enjoyment waiting for Idahoans on public ground, and, without casting blame upon fellow citizens, explained that "some of the resources users – miners, stockmen, loggers – were upset by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976." Supporting the Act as a move towards serving the greater good, Trueblood identified the real force behind the Sagebrush Rebellion: not hard-working Idahoans, but energy companies.[254] It showed Trueblood's brilliance and keen understanding of the Idahoan mindset.

It helped, too, that area leaders acknowledged the Rebellion's value in bringing real problems to the fore. BLM chief Frank Gregg felt that the movement had made federal bureaucrats more sensitive to Western needs. The Rebellion had served to educate Gregg who admitted, "We thought we were doing a good job talking to ranchers.

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[253] "Wildlife groups ask Reagan to stall land sales," *U.P. International,* 7/30/1982. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 10, Folder 9.
[254] Ted Trueblood, "The Best Thing Around Boise," p. 2, 4-5. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 11, Folder 1.

We found out we weren't."[255] When Sagebrush Rebels attacked the Proposed Birds of Prey Expansion Area, Harold Miles, representing Idaho Consumer Affairs as well as the Golden Eagle Audubon Society of Southwestern Idaho, wrote to Congressman James Santini to spell out Idaho's stand. Miles defended the Bureau of Land Management for it had proved "very fair and impartial in administering the public land laws" and that "many, many people and organizations, both inside and outside Idaho favor retaining the present public lands in Federal ownership."[256]

Ultimately the Sagebrush Rebellion, deemed a symbolic effort by its own champions, failed and, to some degree, faded. The Rebellion's proposed land transfer passed in the Idaho House, but failed in the Senate, and over 17,000 Idahoans had signed petitions opposing the land transfer.[257] While Idahoans did agree on their dislike of federal policy, they could not agree on alternate policies that suited them better.[258] Other states dropped out of the rally as well, losing interest in the imagined slight to their dignity when it became apparent that it served the government's best interest, and not their own, to transfer public lands. The *Arizona Republic* declared, "There is not going to be a land rush in the region if the Western states have anything to say about it," including a figure of 200 billion dollars in store for Washington should the transfer take place.[259]

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[255] "BLM chief criticizes Sagebrush Rebellion," 7/11/1980. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 11, Folder 6.
[256] Harold C. Miles, letter to James Santini, January 15, 1981. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 11, Folder 1.
[257] "'Rebellion' stalls but actions by Watt, proposals in Congress threaten downhill slide for western wildlife, living quality," *The Idaho Citizen.* Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 10, Folder 4.
[258] Stapilus, *Paradox Politics,* 50.
[259] "Counterattack Over Land," *Arizona Republic,* 2/9/1982. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 10, Folder 8.

The Sagebrush Rebellion, its catchy name evoking romantic notions of cowboy heritage, dwindled away, leaving environmentalist Wallace Stegner to conclude that Secretary of the Interior Watt "used the energy crisis as justification for environmental rapine and generally wrapped exploitation of extractive resources in the flag."[260] His heady prose perhaps sounded better the way Trueblood put it when he warned that they really were "fixing to steal your land."[261]

Contentions stirred by the Rebellion played a powerful role in Idaho politics. The group Outdoorsmen for Church had strongly supported Democratic Senator Frank Church and his outdoor values, listing Church's environmental achievements as victories for outdoor enthusiasts: the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Sawtooth National Recreational Area, the Hells Canyon Recreational Area, the compromises for both the Gospel Hump Wilderness and St. Joe River, and the River of No Return Wilderness Act. In working to re-elect Church, they offered a simple rallying statement: *Idaho wins with Church*.[262] Idaho outdoorsmen considered Church "not only the best friend we have among Idaho's Congressional delegation; on many issues, he is our only friend." They worked to keep Church in office, praising his preservation triumphs and calling his opponent, Steve Symms, "an extremist against wilderness preservation, public land use, and funding for alternative energy." They even offered dire predictions that a Symms

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[260] Wallace Stegner, "Lost Horizons," *New West,* July 1981, p 136. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 10, Folder 4.
[261] Ted Trueblood, "They're Fixing to Steal Your Land." Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 10, Folder 9.
[262] Outdoorsmen for Church, campaign letter, 8/22/1980, p. 1-3. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 6.

win would result in "Idaho's forests and desert lands auctioned off to the highest bidder and then surrounded with barbed wire to keep all of us out."[263] A poignant and powerful reality of Idahoan character ran through their wording, particularly their choice in identifying the shared plight by *all of us.* That bitter reminder spoke of a collective stranded in a desert no one else wanted. For Idahoans, that plight afforded a sense of kinship, that they found something – the wilderness – to enjoy, and that they had to stand together to keep what little they had from being barbed-wired away from their meager cooperative grasp.

Not only mining and logging industries, but livestock issues posed controversy in the mid-1980s. Randy Morris, member of the Committee for Idaho High Desert (CIHD), called for protection of wild lands in Owyhee County, adding that "one hundred years of overgrazing has produced a monotonous sea of sagebrush in many places." Morris and the CIHD favored protecting 315,000 acres of roadless desert in Ada, Elmore, and Owyhee counties (roughly four percent of the total area of those counties). By Morris' reckoning, "There is plenty of land down there for ranching and farming development. Surely we could protect 4 percent of the most isolated for desert wilderness.[264] Morris did not stand alone. By 1984 a survey by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game found that "60 percent of the people believe livestock should be limited in areas where wildlife and livestock compete for forage on public lands.[265] A *Reader's Digest* article criticized

[263] Outdoorsmen for Church.
[264] Randy Morris, "Owyhee deserves wilderness protection." Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 5, Folder 11.
[265] Ron Zellar, "Competition for range use to intensify, ranchers told," *The Idaho Statesman,* 6/29/1984.

the BLM for not protecting public lands against cattle interests, stating that "overgrazing, in fact, is the most widespread cause of environmental damage."[266] Livestock proponents, while simultaneously preserving the romanticism of the American cowboy, stood accused of destroying the environment with defiance and arrogance while making only a "minor contribution to the national food supply."[267] During the controversy surrounding the creation of the Wilderness Bill, Ted Trueblood wrote to the *Statesman* arguing against the bill's opponents, "the Don Quixotes of lumbering, mining, and grazing whose only fear is that they might, somehow, be denied the privilege of making a dollar at the expense of the public."[268]

Making that dollar, unfortunately, meant enough to some Idahoans to bring out the very worst of their natures. A 1979 public hearing of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee inspired Salmon area loggers to attend in T-shirts bearing the proclamation: "Lock it up – we'll burn it up." Loggers protested the expansion of Idaho's Primitive Area, but journalist Jeff Sher reported that "Spokesmen for the environmentalist position outnumbered timber and mining spokesmen 2 to 1."[269]

At the end of the 1970s Idaho rancher Mike Hanley and other Southwestern Idahoans took exception to BLM plans to reduce livestock grazing in an effort to

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[266] James Nathan Miller, "Secretary Andrus makes his stand," *Reader's Digest,* March 1978. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 5, Folder 3.
[267] Denzel Ferguson, "The Price we pay for Public Grazing," *Wild Oregon,* May-June 1981. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 9, Folder 1.
[268] Ted Trueblood, letter to the Editor: "Wilderness Bill's Defender Speaks," *The Idaho Statesman,* 8/27/1961.
[269] Jeff Sher, "Crowd Polarized by Salmon River area differences," *Times-News*, 5/22/1979. Fred Hutchison Papers, MSS 124, Box 7, Folder 32.

regenerate native grasses. To Hanley, who showed an appalling disregard (if not outright bigotry) toward Native Americans, "We're akin to the American Indian. We've made treaties and they've been broken." Regardless of the environmental damage or rights of the general public to preservation measures, the rancher responded: "we've been dictated to and we don't like it."[270] Precisely that sort of attitude reflected journalist Randy Stapilus' assessment, that Idahoans came to Idaho not to forge communities "but to fend for themselves."[271] The Sagebrush Rebellion had not undermined public land ownership, but its failure to unseat government influence had done nothing to vanquish Idahoan dislike of federal policy. The fad of the Rebellion dwindled away, but Idaho resentment proved lasting, as one Environmental Policy Center worker found in dealing with Idahoans: "They're certainly opposed to excessive federal regulation, which is generally regarded as environmental regulation."[272] Vern Ravenscroft referred to Cecil Andrus' order to expand the Birds of Prey Area as "dictatorial crap" and announced his intention to consult a lawyer on fighting the Secretary of the Interior's decision.[273] People struggling to earn a living from desert lands hardly wanted to hear that the government would reduce their meager holdings for the benefit of wildlife or the general public. Though, as the success of Senator Frank Church would show, sometimes Idahoans did not resist preservation so much as preservation that sallied forth without their approval.

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[270] Lonnie Rosenwald, "Desert Battle: Ranchers, BLM fight it in the trenches," *The Idaho Statesman,* 10/21/1979.
[271] Weatherby and Stapilus, *Governing Idaho,* 5.
[272] Norm Brewer & Jake Henshaw, "The Next Four Years: 'Tree-lovers' mustn't fear Reagan tide," *The Idaho Statesman,* 11/23/1980.
[273] "Birds," *The Idaho Statesman,* 11/25/1980.

Conservationist Ken Robison approached the Birds of Prey controversy with simple logic, and explained to Idahoans that development in Southwestern Idaho would divert water needed for electricity into irrigation, raising consumers' utility rates. "What is good for the birds of prey is also good for the pocketbooks of consumers," Robison exhorted, asking "How much more are you willing to pay to subsidize irrigation in the feeding area of the birds of prey?"[274] Other evidence surfaced of environmental support, such as the Southwestern Idaho farmer who favored the expansion of the Birds of Prey area, because "I have yet to see a ranch, farm and hawk that don't get along… we can live together and get along just fine."[275] During BLM hearings related to the Birds of Prey Environmental Impact Statement, more testimonies favored the expansion proposal than opposed it. BLM received 822 letters of support for the expansion; letters opposed numbered only forty-six.[276] Anti-environment and anti-federal protests often drowned out peaceable voices of reason, but by the 21st century the Birds of Prey area had not only survived, but became a state icon.

Toward the close of the 20th century the mistakes of Westward expansion grew ever-more apparent and a 1980 report the Council on Environmental Quality blamed federal subsidizing of arid land agriculture for Western desertification. It identified overdraft of water, salination caused by over irrigation, erosion, and overgrazing as problems for arid land conservation. The report cited federally financed municipalities

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[274] Ken Robison, "Birds of Prey Area," *The Idaho Statesman,* 4/4/1981.
[275] "Local Citizens oppose Birds of Prey expansion," *Mountain Home News,* 6/5/1980. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 2, Folder 15.
[276] Harold C. Miles, letter to James Santini, January 15, 1981. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 11, Folder 1.

and industries as well as low grazing fees as "a major force behind the desertification of the United States."[277] Overgrazing had eroded millions of BLM acres which then suffered lost wildlife habitat, for the benefit of corporations and wealthy stockmen who paid "rock-bottom rates to run their sheep and cattle on public land."[278]

The contentious nature of Idahoans would surface sometimes as greed, sometimes as paranoia, other times as racism. Contending against the expansion of the Birds of Prey area, one resident fumed over the use of the public land, "we ran the Indians off… our forefathers killed them and ran them off, and now we want to give it to the birds!"[279] This fury at such largesse failed to appreciate that few, if any, Native American tribes had considered Idaho a homeland (though they had travelled through when seasonal needs called for it), and certainly that Idaho's raptors had called Idaho home long before humans of any race.[280] Idaho conservationist William Meiners described those early days of settlement thus: "Farmers claimed the best farmland; farther west, cattlemen soon learned that they could control vast areas of public land by claiming the land around streams and waterholes; lumbermen sought the best timberland; and, mining companies claimed the richest mineral deposits. It was a free-wheeling, colorful era marked by violence and, often, fraud."[281] The violence of that era laid the foundation for the myth

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[277] Patrick O'Driscoll, "'Desertification' Verified," *National Public Lands Task Force,* 1981., Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 10, Folder 4.
[278] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style*, 59.
[279] "Local Citizens oppose Birds of Prey expansion," *Mountain Home News,* 6/5/1980. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 2, Folder 15.
[280] Weatherby and Stapilus, *Governing Idaho,* 4.
[281] William R. Meiners, "The Sagebrush Rebellion," presentation to the Oregon Wildlife Federation, 6/20-22/1980, p. 3. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 11, Folder 5.

of the Old West, for stories of cowboys and lawmen, villains and vigilantes. Somehow, the fraud part of Meiners' description remains glossed over and forgotten. Understandably, cattle rustlers make for better stories than legislation dealing with water rights, but those forgotten stories explain Idaho's attitudes, stories of corporations buying out failed family farms, stories of industry allowed to pollute rivers and townsites in exchange for desperately-needed jobs. A free-wheeling and colorful era gave way to an Idaho saddled with eroded river banks, depleted salmon runs, and Bunker Hill's Superfund site carrying a legacy of lead poisoning across two centuries.

CHAPTER FIVE – IRRIGATION AND OTHER LEGACIES

The schism between Idaho and the federal government remains deep, while irony flourishes within Idahoans' relationship to their environment. As Ohio State University professor Tomas Koontz explains, "Greater distance from forests is linked to stronger interest in environmental protection. In contrast, people living near forests tend to support using them for economic benefit." Koontz identifies, too, the contradictory goals of state and federal policies. Federal policies do more for preservation and ecosystem research, having a whole nation's worth of desires to appease. State policies serve the interests of local businesses and reflect the demands made by high-power locals. Despite the advantage given to special interest, revenue from natural resource profit does benefit the general populace (in revenue generated to serve counties, towns, and school districts). Resource-based industry also provides needed jobs. These reasons make most Western states prefer local control over government control.[282]

Local authorities struggle to maintain a balance between the needs and demands of their citizens. In some cases, such as with the problems created by Kellogg's mining interests, state officials could not strike that balance. Mining, however, has not had the

[282] Thomas M. Koontz, *Federalism in the Forest Federalism in the Forest: National versus State Natural Resource Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 15, 17, 44, 65.

same power and privilege that agriculture has long enjoyed. Politicians may brave the contempt of miners only to submit to the whims of Idaho's irrigators. The seriousness of water rights cannot be overstated, as Greenwood stressed, "when a man stole your water, he committed grand larceny… he takes the clothes from your children's backs, robs your wife of the medicine she probably needs, takes every penny out of your overalls pockets. It is no wonder that almost every year farmers are killed at the headgates."[283] Politicians know the value of taking the popular side of so contentious an issue, evidenced by Frank Church's 1968 ad that proclaimed, "Frank Church is running so that Idaho water can keep on running… in Idaho."[284]

Old-fashioned ideas that allow for over-irrigation combined with contemporary chemical pollutants leave fields stripped of nutrients while contamination seeps into the Snake River aquifer. Though irrigation was heralded as a miracle of progress for most of the 20th century, by the early 1990s state officials started to criticize the time-honored practice, along with its practitioners. Tim Palmer's 1991 *The Snake River: Window to the West* quotes Idaho Fish and Game biologist Ruth Gale: "I don't think the public would stand for it if people really knew what a grip the irrigators have on water."[285] Gale's statement defines the problem perfectly: *if people really knew*. Whether through leniency or ignorance, Idahoans' tolerance for the damages of irrigation has made them the target of criticism in preservationist circles. Of Frank Church's environmental efforts, a national conservation lobbyist said, "Church is not going far enough, but if you consider

[283] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 380.
[284] Ewert, *The Conversion of Senator Frank Church,* 102.
[285] Palmer, *The Snake River,* 28.

his constituency, he's doing pretty well."[286] This honest, if unflattering, summation of Idahoan character suggests that Church's achievements happened despite the backward, selfish nature of the people he represented.

For Church's achievements and for all that Idahoans across the ages might acknowledge the value and grandeur of their natural surroundings, they remain a sadly practical lot. They have long since grasped the bitter truth, that someone - if not themselves, then some outsider - will find a way to profit by way of Idaho's natural resources. When the economy falters and jobs grow scarce Idahoans find themselves choosing exile from their small towns and their great outdoors, to seek jobs elsewhere, or to utilize the resources at hand, to damage the splendor of their home state rather than abandon it wholesale for those who would exploit it without reservation. It has equalized in a lackluster compromise: Idahoans defend their hunting and fishing grounds with one hand while defending mining and logging with the other, exercising just enough temperance to preserve a portion of the natural setting. Reflecting the worry of anticipated economic strife, Cascade sawmill worker Lester Kelley declared, "In Idaho, my future job in the sawmills is dependent upon a reliable and continuing source of saw-logs."[287] This statement came an ironic eight years before the 1987 all-time high for Idaho's timber production, when it produced 1.7 billion board feet.[288] The controversies of preservation inspired Steve Gallizioli, in his 1979 article "Rangeland Conservation," to

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[286] Carol Payne and Margaret Carpenter, *Frank Church: Democratic Senator from Idaho,* Ralph Nader Congress Report: Citizen's Look at Congress. (Washington, D.C.: Grossman Publishers, 1972), 15.
[287] Rod Gramer, "TV ads to attack Sen. Church," *Statesman Valley*, 8/31/1979. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 5.
[288] Barker, *Saving all the Parts,* 94.

write that the term *environmentalist* had become a dirty word amongst Westerners. "A lot of people now react to it as they do to 'Communist,' 'atheist,' 'child abuser,' and 'oil company executive.'"[289] While Gallizioli's assessment carried a note of exaggerated humor, Professor Richard White, in 1995, identified the very somber reality that environmentalists, in struggling against resource-based jobs, had earned a reputation as "a privileged leisure class."[290]

Allaying fears against economic uncertainty provided a difficult task, even among people who truly valued their wild lands. Religion, as politicians and journalists discovered, offered an effective approach for swaying Idahoans toward preservation. Politicians like Frank Church appealed to Idaho's god-fearing majority by calling for preservation of wilderness for the purpose of "communion with God" while Ted Trueblood described wilderness areas as "libraries of God's work."[291] Calls for preservation reiterated Christian sentiment, God's handiwork, and evoked wholesome outdoor values. The Idaho Outdoor Association opposed dam construction below the Snake-Salmon confluence and urged Church to "strike a telling blow for the preservation of our God given heritage." Preservation, once derided as bunk, recruited deity itself when tourism dollars and weekend fishing trips faced peril. [292]

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[289] Steve Gallizioli, "Rangeland Conservation," *Auction Action,* 1979. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 9, Folder 3.
[290] White, "'Are you an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?' Work and Nature,": 181.
[291] Neil, *To the White Clouds,* 121.
[292] Ewert, *The Conversion of Senator Frank Church,* 22, 24.

Ralph Nader "Citizens Look at Congress" (a 1970s showcasing of prominent politicians) acknowledged Church as "the best we have. He is more politically practical [than conservationists] – more of a political animal because he has to live with the realities of Idaho politics."[293] The realities of Idaho politics meant that Church had to serve all Idahoans - the miners and lumbermen as well as the outdoor enthusiasts. So well did he accomplish the task that in 1970 a representative of Idaho Lumber, Inc., wrote to support the National Forest Timber Conservation Act. "This bill is being attacked under the guise of conservation," wrote the company's president, Arthur Johnson, adding, "this attack is not justified, and as the bill as it now stands would produce necessary timber management and… assist in commercial timber production."[294] Church did not labor alone in representing labor interests along with conservation. In his 1973 speech to the Parks and Recreation Subcommittee (on the matter of the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area bill), Governor Andrus said, "While I recognize our responsibility to protect the Middle Snake, I also recognize our responsibility to protect the payrolls for many of our people."[295]

The realities of Idaho politics demanded compromise, patience, and resilience from environmentally-minded citizens and politicians. They also demanded the maturity to accept partial triumphs and the idealism to surmount unfavorable odds. In 1977 Church negotiated for the protection of 220,000 acres in the Gospel-Hump wilderness,

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[293] Payne and Carpenter, *Frank Church,* 15.
[294] Arthur B. Johnson, Letter to Frank Church, 2/16/1970. Frank Church Papers, MSS 56, Box 135, Folder 13.
[295] Cecil Andrus, "Hells Canyon National Recreation Area," 12/14/1973. Frank Church Papers, MSS 56, Box 69, Folder 3.

leaving 123,000 acres for logging. Though Governor John Evans praised the compromise, Steve Symms predicted it would result in "instant poverty." Despite the grimness of Symms' pro-timber rhetoric, the *Lewiston Tribune* supported Church's agenda and wrote, "make no mistake about it: rather large numbers of Idahoans, to greater and lesser degrees, want something left standing of Idaho as they knew it as children."[296] The proposal for the River of No Return Wilderness met with opposition among Idaho's industries, but changes in Idaho's social fabric no longer guaranteed public support for profit. Cecil Andrus, area sportsmen's clubs, environmental organizations, and even a River of No Return Wilderness Council rallied behind the proposal.[297] When it came to citizen response, Church's post card poll on the Salmon River Preservation Bill and the proposed study for a Sawtooth National Park reflected eighty-eight percent support for the former and almost seventy-eight percent for the latter.[298]

While Church's style eased resistance toward state management policies, the distant authority of federal control remained a multi-faceted target for Idahoan displeasure. Not only water, but land use and proposed conservation stoked the fires of resentment. The Birds of Prey Sanctuary in Western Idaho prompted politician Vernon Ravenscroft to declare that "Idaho doesn't need a non-resident landlord in the form of the federal government." Meanwhile, then-Representative Steve Symms agreed it served as

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[296] Ewert, *The Conversion of Senator Frank Church,* 200-201.
[297] Ibid., 206.
[298] Frank Church, "Tabulation by counties of responses to post card poll of Senator Frank Church," March 3, 1960. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 1, Folder 9.

"yet another example of federal encroachment on state land and resources."[299] Government regulations protecting wolves provided a perennial source of anger, "I don't like the law that says a wolf can come and eat my livestock," complained rancher Dan Geer, to the Idaho Falls *Post Register* in 1987, "and all I can do is call the government predator-control branch. It seems ridiculous the way it is. All I can do is call."[300] Geer expressed an anger rooted less in the loss of the livestock, and more in the loss of his freedom to do as he liked. He did not reinforce the worth of the livestock, he reiterated his anger: *all I can do is call.* Like many Idahoans accustomed to solving (or mishandling) their own problems, Geer wanted to do a great deal more than make a phone call, and someone (the government) created a regulation to stop him. That Washington officials lived far from the grim realities of ranching life compounded ranchers' resentment.

In *The Snake River,* author Tim Palmer confronted the frustrating ironies and inconsistencies of Idahoan values. He addresses the unattractive truth that Idahoans, who will fight endlessly over lesser causes, will all but bow, hats in their hands, to the whims of irrigators. An Oregonian and alum of Pennsylvania State University, Palmer explored the Snake River literally, including his discoveries and impressions of the river itself while he explored the history, attitudes, and decisions of the people who transformed the once-wild waterway into a working river. Palmer's criticism for Idahoans sometimes verges near condemnation, though he does provide rationale for his viewpoint. A

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[299] "Local Citizens oppose Birds of Prey expansion," *Mountain Home News,* 6/5/1980. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 2, Folder 15.
[300] Barker, *Saving All the Parts*, 185.

thorough work, *The Snake River* includes the interviews Palmer conducted with irrigation officials, farmers, Native Americans, and politicians. It offers a description of the riparian habitat, water quality, fish population, and tourism industry that irrigated agriculture has kept from the general public. Something of a lament, the work reflects both sincerity and able research. Cecil Andrus, in his own book, referenced *The Snake River* as an "excellent" work.[301]

Employing both historical and contemporary evidence, Palmer tells of a 1987 incident, when pollution resulting from a truck wreck killed 180,000 fish in the Little Salmon River. The Department of Fish and Game took legal action over the accident. No one took any action, legal or otherwise, when Idaho irrigators and the Bureau of Reclamation, killed 600,000 fish in their routine operation of federal dams.[302] Idahoans, who defied a federal proposal and thwarted the New Deal over a dam in Hells Canyon, would not think of accusing their friends, the irrigators, of bespoiling local fishing spots. Idahoans, ironically, furthered the cause of environmental protection while they turned their backs on their own splendors. Palmer summed up the issue succinctly when he wrote that "virtually every history book on Idaho speaks of dams and irrigation in glowing terms."[303]

Even with a growing concern for the environmental damage caused by irrigation, a 21st century account, *The Whole Dam Story* by an American Falls resident, claimed that

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[301] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style*, 126.
[302] Palmer, *The Snake River*, 23.
[303] Ibid., 53.

"Impounding upper Snake River waters in the reservoir represents a mighty achievement."[304] Despite the contemporary understanding of the destructive impact of dam-building, Idaho's artificial agricultural environment remains the recipient of awed praise. Few things can conjure American sympathy like the plight of the hard-working farmer and in Idaho that sentiment is compounded by firsthand knowledge of just how dry the terrain is. Of Idaho's four million irrigated acres, 3.8 million are in the Snake River Basin. The Snake River Plain receives an average rainfall of less than ten inches per year, so far below the national average of thirty annual inches that it would take an abundance of faith or folly to try to farm in Southern Idaho.[305] Certainly, it would take an enormous amount of work. A tradition of respect for hard work, an understanding of the utter necessity of water for farming, and a keen awareness of the state's economic dependence upon agriculture cause Idahoans to grant irrigators a lot of leeway. In 2008, Idaho's net farm income was $1.7 billion.[306]

However, Idahoans do not bestow irrigators such leeway simply out humanitarian sentiment. Idahoans, in forever yielding to the semi-sacred status of water rights, grant irrigators the power to stand between themselves and the federal government. The unimpeachable power of water rights, wielded by Idaho irrigators, protects all Idahoans from the two threats they feel would compromise their public lands: non-Idahoans and

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[304] Ella Marie Rast, *The Whole Dam Story: The Drowning and Rising of a River City in the West,* (Bloomington, IN: 1st Books Library, 2004), 129.
[305] Palmer, *The Snake River,* 33, 90.
[306] John Hammel, "Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture," Idaho State Joint Legislative Economic Outlook and Revenue Assessment Committee, University of Idaho, (Moscow), 1/7/2009, http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/Budget/EORAC/HammelPresentation.pdf. (Accessed 4/2/2009).

the federal government. Such protection comes at a high price; irrigation, along with the subsequent farming and development irrigation makes possible, has destroyed eighty percent of the riverfront habitat on the Snake River.[307] Faced with southern California's perennial request for Idaho water, Idahoans know that the only protection they have lies within the water rights guaranteed by the state's constitution. They also know that those rights retain power, in the hands of irrigators, through the maintenance of the sacrosanct nature of beneficial use.

Idaho, besides its fame for potatoes and scandalous association with Neo-Nazis, has a reputation for anti-government sentiment that, to many observers, appears the product of ignorance. Journalist Randy Stapilus, in 1988, asked the question in unflattering terms: "Why does Idaho do such crazy things?"[308] Understanding Idaho and its citizenry calls for understanding the land, the hardships of the early settlers, and the legal and social codes that allowed them to survive. Idaho, with myriad natural resources on sixty-five million acres of public land provides its people with shared riches enough to make them all wealthy, in spirit if not in their bank accounts.[309] Idaho's wilderness offers abundant hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling, bicycling, rafting, camping, and the simple pleasure of scenic drives. It remains, as early settler Annie Pike Greenwood observed, that "there are compensations in being poor."[310] With over twelve percent of the population living below the poverty level and a per capita yearly income of $21,000,

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[307] Palmer, *The Snake River*, 13.
[308] Stapilus, *Paradox Politics*, 1-2.
[309] Brooks, "It Happened in Hells Canyon."
[310] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 272.

Idahoans do not remain in Idaho for economic bounty.[311] Their wealth lies in shared ownership of public lands, of an outdoor lifestyle afforded by climate and geography.

That Idahoans value their surroundings is evident in their recreation, in their tourism industry, and their politics. Senatorial and gubernatorial campaigns have long used the outdoors to appeal to constituents. Campaign slogans, such as Walt Minnick's 2008 declaration that "hunting and fishing are part of our Western heritage" resonate not only with sportsmen, but with the environmentally-minded who understand that conservation succeeds through an alliance of all outdoor enthusiasts.[312] The South Fork of the Snake River alone boasts of 120,000 recreation days per year while fishing brings in an estimated four billion dollars to the state annually.[313] Tourism, in Idaho, goes hand-in-hand with native Idahoans' enthusiasm for outdoor recreation. The Idaho Department of Commerce describes outdoor Idaho as "83,574 square miles of outdoor recreation heaven" and provides links to twenty-two categories of activities ranging from extreme sports to bird watching.[314] According to Idaho's Department of Fish and Game "Idaho has some of the best and most varied hunting in the west!" The Fish and Game website offers extensive information to aid sportsmen in their hunting and fishing excursions, including separate links for residents and non-residents.[315] Prominently displayed on the

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[311] U.S. Census Bureau, "Idaho Fact Sheet," American Fact Finder, (Washington D.C. 2006), http:// factfinder.census.gov /servlet/ADPTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=04000US16&qr_name=ACS_2006 _EST_ G00_DP3&-ds_ name=ACS_ 2006_EST_G00_&-_lang=en&-_sse=on. (Accessed 4/14/2008).
[312] Idaho State Democratic Party, "Walt Minnick for Congress." Campaign mailing, Boise, ID, 3/25/2008.
[313] Palmer, *The Snake River,* 19-20.
[314] Idaho Division of Tourism, "Adventures in Living." http://www.visitidaho.org/thingstodo/ outdoorrecreation.aspx. (Accessed 9/27/2008).
[315] Idaho Fish and Game, "Hunting." Boise, http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/hunt/. (Accessed 9/27/2008).

main page of their website, the Department of Commerce declares that "Idaho's $2.97 billion tourism industry created jobs for Idahoans and generated $438 million in local, state, and federal tax revenue."[316] Whether the Department of Commerce intends these glad tidings to endear Idahoans to tourists or to foster support for the environment by assigning it a dollar value, such statements lend help on either front.

With much of Idaho's population in the arid southern portion of the state, the voting majority today and in times past demanded that politicians protect water rights before all else. Economic success and everyday survival depended upon access to wells or canals. Harold Funke, an attorney hired to protect the water interests of Fort Hall's Shoshone and Bannock tribes, summed up the issue in a single sentence: "those who control water control agriculture and so they control Idaho."[317] Irrigators have long held power over not only canals and reservoirs, but over Idaho citizens. Little wonder that Perry Swisher made his disdain for southern Idaho painfully clear when he said "it was a son-of-a-bitching desert until it was irrigated" with no question of whether the desert had any higher purpose.[318] Irrigation and maintaining Idaho's artificial Eden remain paramount in the state. Even those, like Andrus, who favor conservation to agriculture, reflect common ground with those opposed to outside interest in Idaho's water. In reference to the Lower Snake dams, Andrus wrote, "the benefits of these dams are endlessly touted. The Northwest receives low cost energy. The dams help heat

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[316] Idaho Department of Commerce, "Idaho's Contribution to Your Bottom Line." (Boise, 2008), http://commerce.idaho.gov/. (Accessed 9/28/2008).
[317] Palmer, *The Snake River,* 47.
[318] Ibid., 88.

Californians' hot tubs."[319] His reference to California represents the traditional Idaho view: Idaho water should serve Idahoans, and it should serve the needs of industry, agriculture, and even wild life before it serves non-Idahoans.

Dams and irrigation needs complicated the matter of water rights from the earliest days of settlement; dams and post-war hydroelectric demands embrangle present environmental and social issues. Annie Pike Greenwood, even in the 1930s, observed with some sorrow the impact of dams upon the once-mighty and wild Snake River. "The Snake glides smoothly along, as though anxious to escape observation, for man has robbed her of her power. Not twenty years before the Snake was a rushing dragon." Such a sight modern Idahoans can only imagine with the help of Greenwood's prose, detailing a river "scaly with silver lights and smoking mists, a terrific force."[320] Greenwood's passage sounds almost like a fairy tale, it seems the product of imagination that today's working river ever roared along, dragon-like and powerful. Palmer criticizes Idahoans for allowing irrigators the power to tamper with and degrade riparian habitat, and he criticizes irrigators for how much water they waste. Conservationists suggest that irrigators should turn unused water back into the river, to aid aquatic plants and animals. While turning unneeded water back into the river sounds simple enough, irrigators find themselves constrained by the fact that if ever they request less water than their current allotment, it will lower the amount they can withdraw in subsequent years. Ever fearful of drought, prudent irrigators will not take such risk. While federal agencies or

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[319] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style,* 93.
[320] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 267.

conservation groups could, technically, purchase surplus water from the irrigators and turn it back into the rivers, the irrigators cannot legally sell all the water they *take,* only the water they actually *use.* It would serve to the irrigators' detriment to establish a precise amount of water used and find their allotment thus reduced.[321] Tradition, too, aids and abets the flawed system. Palmer's observation lands perfectly on-target: "dams and water rights are held in the esteem of the flag, or the church, or the right to bear arms."[322] Indeed, from the earliest days of settlement, Idahoans praised irrigators as "the agents of God's great plan for the earth."[323] Criticism for irrigation seemed tantamount to criticizing the Almighty, almost as unthinkable in the 21st century as in the 20th.

In 1960, while Frank Church worked on plans for a national park in the Sawtooths, the *Pocatello Intermountain* lauded his efforts while observing that "we are politically and strategically among the weakest states in the union, if we are not the weakest."[324] Church bolstered his popularity routinely with his defense of water rights. He promised, "As long as I am in a senior position on the (Senate) Energy and Natural Resources Committee, there will be no diversion of water out of the Northwest."[325] Not only Church's staunch defense of water aided his political career, but so, too, did the extent to which he sought public opinion. In the first session of the 86th Congress, on the issue of salmon conservation, Church stated, "I would hope to sit with… and to listen to

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[321] Palmer, *The Snake River*, 131.
[322] Ibid., 34.
[323] Fiege, *Irrigated Eden,* 23.
[324] Ewert, *The Conversion of Senator Frank Church*, 27-28.
[325] Lonnie Rosenwald, "Water plans spark concern in Northwest." *Statesman Valley*, 8/31/1979. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 5.

the points of view expressed by those people in the Northwest who have a lifelong and vital interest in the Columbia River and the Salmon River."[326] Again and again Church professed and proved his sense of duty to his constituents, his willingness to hear their voices. For Idahoans, this sort of politics, no matter which party they voted for, offered a welcome change from the routine neglect or dismissal they'd grown accustomed to.

Irrigation, in politics, in law and in practice, has set the tone for life in Idaho since the 19th century. Anyone speaking of irrigation, in Idaho, refers almost exclusively to the Snake River system, which serves eighty-seven percent of Idaho.[327] The Doctrine of Appropriation rules Idaho's water and citizens, described in the language of ordinary people as "first in time, first in right." Donald Worster criticizes the Doctrine for the boundless power it has granted to irrigators, for "it mattered not at all how far from the river he lived or how far he diverted the water from its natural course, mattered not at all if he drained the river bone-dry."[328] As conservationist Ed Chaney described, "irrigation water has traditionally been even cheaper than energy… and irrigation's traditional legal and political preeminence over all instream water uses, have not encouraged water-use efficiency."[329] The Bureau of Reclamation, which ought to serve the best interests of the

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[326] Proceedings and Debates of the 86th Congress, First Session, Vol. 105 No. 145, 8/24/1959. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 1, Folder 9.
[327] Weatherby and Stapilus, *Governing Idaho,* 4.
[328] Worster, *Rivers of Empire,* 88.
[329] Ed Chaney, "A Question of Balance," p. 19, November 1978. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 7.

general public and the environment, instead, as Andrus wrote, "sees irrigators as its constituency and their satisfaction as its responsibility and legal duty."[330]

Irrigation tells Idaho's history, even as it predicts its future. Frank Church explained, "The history of the West has been one of reliance on local and state water rights as the backbone of our economic development."[331] Idaho is, in fact, the only state with an entire article written into its constitution solely for water.[332] "It is a passage," Andrus identified, "that is almost as fundamental to the convictions of eastern Idaho irrigators as the Book of Mormon."[333] When he reflected upon one of Idaho's worst engineering debacles, Andrus recalled, "I had doubts about Teton Dam… [but] the dam enjoyed fervent support from irrigators in eastern Idaho."[334] Eastern Idahoans, with their tendency to think, act, and vote with one accord, had a history of getting their way.

A 1977 request from Los Angeles for water diversions from the Columbia and Snake Rivers fueled Idahoan paranoia over water rights and kindled their anger against perceived outsiders. As one Boise businessman proclaimed, "We'll meet them at the banks of the river with pitchforks."[335] The prevailing fears and attitudes have long kept Idahoan focus on the outside threats of regulations and quasi-theft, instead of on the inside threats of pollution and environmental damage. Those within their borders causing the most damage also serve as their strongest champions against outside forces, Idahoans

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[330] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style*, 127.
[331] "Water-rights battle anticipated," *The Idaho Statesman*, 8/31/1979.
[332] Weatherby and Stapilus, *Governing Idaho,* 8.
[333] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style*, 125.
[334] Ibid., 24.
[335] Rosenwald, "Water plans spark concern in Northwest." *Statesman Valley*, 8/31/1979. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 5.

remain content to let their protectors (namely irrigators) claim their due, with little regard to the cost. "If you want water for irrigation in Idaho," wrote Ted Trueblood, "you can divert it from any stream to dry it up completely – to hell with the fish." Trueblood's bitterness almost rivals Greenwood's when he acknowledged that fish "are not a legally beneficial use of water."[336] He wrote those words in 1977 and more than three decades later, they are still true.

The irrigators have kept themselves well versed in self-defense. In response to depletions of salmon runs, Sherl Chapman, executive Director of the Idaho Water Users Association, blamed commercial fishing over irrigation for fish losses. "It is unreasonable to commit additional large quantities of water from Idaho's streams and rivers for re-establishment and enhancement of fish runs that may only be further depleted by continued pressure from commercial, Indian, and sports fishermen in downstream states." Chapman's wily choice of words paved the way for Idahoans to take his side, including mention of "pushing… farmers into a position of marginal operation and potential bankruptcy."[337] Indeed, why should hard-working Idaho farmers risk their livelihoods by sacrificing *Idaho water* for non-Idahoans? Those irrigators provide a mighty bulwark indeed. 30,000 Southern Idaho farmers bring in 350 million dollars annually, both solidifying and justifying their control of the Snake River system, including its 4.5 million acre feet of water in the Jackson Lake, Palisades Lake, Island

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[336] Ted Trueblood, "Inside the Interior's Superior," Field and Stream (1977) 19. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 5, Folder 3.
[337] Sherl L. Chapman, "Water Users Association: Don't Preclude Development." Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89 Box 9 Folder 1.

Park, and American Falls reservoirs. Though the Bureau of Reclamation controls those reservoirs, they do so at the behest of local irrigation officials.[338]

Tim Palmer attributes the anti-federal attitude of both Idaho and Wyoming for the reluctance of federal agencies to enact water reform. He goes as far as to call any such effort "a suicidal endeavor" and quotes Chapman: "the concerns for water quality, recreation, fish, and wildlife are seen by agriculture as an attack on water use."[339] Karl Brooks credits successful Snake River Basin irrigators in shaping the region's "outlook on all matters touching the life-giving water."[340] The Bureau of Reclamation, understandably in consideration of the agency's name, serves irrigators ahead of the public, ahead of rivers, wilderness, or wildlife. Had irrigators not champions enough within that federal agency, in southern Idaho they have their own bulwark, an organization made up of representatives elected from the three major irrigation districts. These individuals, three each from the Henrys Fork, South Fork, and Minidoka districts, make up the Committee of Nine.[341] Idaho Power, in *Legacy of Light,* identified the committee as an ally: "They were chosen by design. The Committee of Nine aided Idaho Power considerably."[342] Whether they see themselves as utility henchmen or independent agents crusading in the name of irrigation alone, the Committee of Nine wields power enough that journalist Randy Stapilus said "no sane southern Idaho politician intentionally would get on their wrong side." Bolstering that assessment of

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[338] Barker, *Saving All the Parts*, 57-58.
[339] Palmer, *The Snake River*, 71, 127.
[340] Brooks, *Public Power, Private Dams*, 30.
[341] Fiege, *Irrigated Eden,* 104.
[342] Stacy, *Legacy of Light*, 146.

their own accord, Committee of Nine members Dale Rockwood and Claude Storer declared that "irrigators own the space in federal reservoirs and are entitled to divert all water available to fill their water rights."[343] While these men admirably defend the right of hard-working farmers to earn their livelihood, they pay no heed to the fact that *federal* reservoirs are not the sole property of irrigators and that diverting *all water available* may cause ecological damage with repercussions too great to justify a season's successful crops for a fraction of Idaho's population.

When crying poverty might not prove sufficient to win the public to the irrigators' cause, irrigators apply not-so-subtle coercion. The mere hint of potential increases in Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards sent mid-1970s newspapers writers into action. *The Rexburg Standard* spun tales of impending economic hardship, identifying EPA rulings as "a kick in the pocketbook" while deriding environmental protection protocols as unfair, unnecessary, and costly. The EPA sought to align its principles with those of the 1972 Clean Water Act, by monitoring discharged water from irrigated farmland. Rexburg area farmers felt that only a few nefarious individuals caused the pollution, but that they would all have to pay for the crimes of the few and that "this increased cost would be reflected on the cost of food and fiber to the consumer."[344]

The Rexburg Standard either ignored the fact that the EPA's standards might also protect the sole source of drinking water for many of said consumers, or simply

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[343] Palmer, *The Snake River*, 22.
[344] John C. Porter, "EPA Ruling could triple farm irrigation cost," *The Rexburg Standard,* 2/12/1974. Cecil D. Andrus Archives, MSS 141, Box 73, Folder 26.

considered the matter unworthy of comment. In fact, the EPA's evaluation from 1973 revealed that the beneficial use of the Snake River went beyond irrigation to include domestic water use, salmon spawning and rearing, and recreation, all uses potentially threatened by industrial and agricultural contamination. State water quality standards theoretically prohibited pollution caused either by foreign matter or excess nutrients of unnatural origin, the former attributed generally to industry and the latter to agriculture.[345] Unfortunately, for those drinking from, recreating in, or fishing for salmon on the Snake River, the economic interests of Idaho's farmers and industrialists had long since enjoyed priority.

Fort Hall's Native Americans have expressed a desire to turn their share of water back into the river to benefit wildlife, but Idaho's constitution impedes such efforts because preservation does not fit the definition of beneficial use of water.[346] Beneficial use further designates water use as consumptive and non-consumptive. As the names imply, consumptive water use does not return water to its source (hydroelectricity is a non-consumptive use). In 1987, 25.1 million gallons were taken from the Snake River. Over eight million of those gallons were in the consumptive use category while .4 million of the 8.2 went for municipal and industrial use, the rest went into irrigation. California and Idaho have long been the top two water users in the nation. Idaho, partly for its traditionally low population, has long been the unchallenged number-one user of water at the per-capita level. In 1980 the per-capita national average water usage in gallons-per-

[345] EPA Staff Evaluation on NDPES Permit, 11/27/1973. Cecil D. Andrus Archives, MSS 141, Box 73, Folder 26.
[346] Palmer, *The Snake River,* 44.

day was 2,000. In Idaho, it was 19,000.[347] The argument can be made that Idaho's low population and high need for irrigated acreage justifies that astonishing difference, but no argument can change Idahoans' reputation for wasting their most precious resource.

There is, certainly, when it comes to water in Idaho, a whole-hearted endeavor to make the most of the resource. Hydroelectricity has proven a problematic gift horse. It further burdens an over-worked river, pushing salmon even lower on the list of river priorities, but it does provide for pumps and sprinklers. Gravity irrigation poses environmental problems from over watering, which puts more nitrogen into the aquifer, compounds erosion, and leads to barren, salinated fields. Sprinklers allow for measured application, but do require pumps. Though electricity did ease the burden on rural communities, it also provided another master for nature to serve. Idaho Power, a key player in Idaho's economical and environmental history, held nothing in reserve when manipulating the public. In the utility's efforts to stifle development of governmentally-funded electricity it played upon Idahoans' fears, patriotism, and indignation.[348] It exacerbated Idahoans' anti-federal outlook in the attempt to aid its own corporate growth. It took credit for stopping the Hells Canyon High Dam, something that Cecil Andrus derided as "taking a bow for something the public did."[349] Naturally, in Idaho Power's telling, the organization "stood at the top of the heap as the remarkable small company

[347] Palmer, *The Snake River*, 102-103.
[348] Stacy, *Legacy of Light*, 80.
[349] Cecil Andrus, interview.

that had vanquished the immensity of the federal government."[350] The sentiment practically rings with fanfare, whether or not it rings true.

In the question of irrigators' rights, Palmer uses Palisades Dam as an example and finds that irrigators paid for only eleven percent of the project. He asserts that the public pays for the dams while irrigators take charge of them, costing taxpayers not only in dollars, but in recreation and in wilderness and wildlife that do not belong solely to irrigators. He condemns irrigators, too, for dangers to kayakers from the lack of warning about perilous conditions created by diversions and weirs. "The irrigators demand full control of operations of the reservoirs but accept no responsibility for safety."[351] Arguably the average Idahoan might care more about an irrigator's right to make a living than a kayaker's right to safe recreation, but Palmer offers a valid suggestion that irrigators owe the public some consideration for safety. His ready criticism marks him as a non-native, but his bitterness in no way invalidates his perspective that "At great public cost the people of Idaho, Wyoming, the Northwest and the nation forego the benefits of a living river so that some unknown number of farmers may receive a small amount of free water that spills out of a leaking and excessive irrigation system that drains the Snake River dry."[352] As politician Perry Swisher believed, "The emotional tie to water is closer than the tie to the land. You'd see the socialization of private property in this society

[350] Stacy, *Legacy of Light*, 149.
[351] Palmer, *The Snake River,* 59-60, 62.
[352] Ibid., 120-21.

before you'd see the socialization of water rights."[353] Water rights traditionally referred to the rights of irrigators to divert water for crops and livestock, for beneficial use, the end result by which Americans settled the mighty West. Today, conservationists suggest that water rights extend to the rights of non-agricultural citizens, a right to clean culinary water, a right to the bounty yielded by healthy riparian habitat, a right to living rivers. Creating distinctions in this bevy of rights proved difficult when the economic interests of the region's despots were also at stake. Worster's words echo with a grim note of prophecy: "so long as irrigation continued, no real movement, no revolution, could occur in the social system."[354] While those in power prefer that Idaho water serves irrigation first, the will of the common people can never so much as bear investigation, much less alter the course of once-mighty rivers.

From the outset, Idaho attracted the poor. People with neither land nor inheritance rich enough to support them took their willingness and ambition to an even more barren place, only to see their fertile dreams wither in the arid landscape. Idahoans survived in spite of the odds; they remained Idahoans because they had nowhere else to go. Many have remained poor. As authors James Weatherby and Randy Stapilus wrote, "On either a per capita or income basis, Idaho ranks close to the bottom in many public spending categories."[355] Idaho, its brief fame for mining notwithstanding, has never held any great claim to wealth. This sad fact even schoolchildren in the early 1900s could see,

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[353] Rosenwald, "Water plans spark concern in Northwest." *Statesman Valley*, 8/31/1979. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 5.
[354] Worster, *Rivers of Empire*, 28.
[355] Weatherby and Stapilus, *Governing Idaho,* 8.

as one of Annie Pike Greenwood's students, after the potato harvest, declared, "You can't hardly make nothin' outen nothin', Pa says. He used to be a bricklayer. He says he wisht he's back on the job."[356] The impoverished early settlers bequeathed their anger to their children, who bequeathed their stubborn resilience to their own offspring, all sharing a suspicion of authority that ranged from wariness to hatred. As scholar JoAnn Ruckman observed, the plight of the Idaho irrigation farmer remains part of "a perverse American saga in which the amazing successes of American farming… led to degrading failure for many individual farmers."[357] Ruckman's choice of the words *degrading failure* provide a keen and poignant insight into Idaho's cultural history. While failure could have meant relocation and better fortune for some, those who remained in Idaho did so because they could not afford to leave. They stayed, never able to distance themselves physically or emotionally from their failure. They stayed, trading dreams of independent farming for lackluster alternatives, bequeathing their children with disenchantment instead of successful farming ventures.

A 2001 study into the impact on poverty on Idaho children found that the national average for childhood poverty increased fifteen percent between 1979 and 1998; in Idaho the increase was forty-nine percent. Of Idaho in particular, two educational officials agreed that "children living in poverty also tend to live in social isolation." That Idaho's childhood poverty rate increased by half reflects Idaho's abject circumstances, a state impoverished financially, educationally, and socially. The same study found that, unique

[356] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 79.
[357] JoAnn Ruckman, forward, *We Sagebrush Folks,* xvii.

to Idaho, there was no correlation between an increase in poverty and an increase in what they deemed 'welfare cultures.' While other states' poverty rates reflect high numbers of people relying heavily on welfare, many of Idaho's poor families have working parents, with wages insufficient to bring their household out of poverty.[358] 2001 figures found one in five Idaho children living in poverty, and in 2000 Idaho ranked last in the nation for its percentage of two year olds with full immunization. Idaho's senior citizens suffer, too; Idahoans' 1998 percentage of citizens receiving Medicaid was 9.64 while the national average was 13.4. Poverty hinders rural Idaho specifically, with low wages, lack of public transportation, and greater distances to urban services.[359]

Jobs, always important in Idaho, remain both conundrum and problem. Sites such as the INL, which employs many southeastern Idahoans while leaching radioactive waste into the Snake River aquifer, receive support among Idahoans, for, as Weatherby and Stapilus conclude, "jobs have a higher priority than the fear of nuclear waste storage."[360] Legislation that could preserve nature and its resources, though staunchly defended by some, meets routine opposition with poverty as the battle cry. The Wilderness Bill, meant to preserve some parts of Idaho for future generations, fell under attacked by the livestock, mining, and timber industries. Though that bill passed, its detractors' efforts offer a grim reminder of how economic fears sway Idaho voters. It stirred such reactions

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[358] Linda J. Anooshian, "Growing up Poor in Idaho: Impact on School Readiness and Educational Performance," in *Idaho Kids Count* (Boise, 2001), 2, 6; and Linda J. Anooshian, "Family Poverty Poses Significant Challenges for Maintaining the Health of Idaho's Children; Researchers have Clearly Linked Poverty and Health," in *Idaho Kids Count* (Boise, 2001), 4.
[359] Anooshian, "Family Poverty," 3, 12, 14, 17.
[360] Weatherby and Stapilus, *Governing Idaho,* 177.

as "Idahoans must fight the Wilderness Bill like they would a plague. It would change our established ways by restriction on our economy. This Idaho cannot afford."[361] *It would change our established ways.* Change, as much as federal policy, frightens most Idahoans nearly to the point of crippling. As they have found some solace in the desert's harsh beauty, so have they found some measure of comfort in maintaining the status quo.

If Idahoans value their wilderness at all, they deeply resent the possibility that a non-Idahoan might also value their natural treasures. Senator Church, when accused of "converting our western forests into wilderness playgrounds for eastern millionaires" found "this argument, widely circulated and surprisingly believed, was enough to blow the mind."[362] Idahoans sided readily with that argument for their resentment deafened them to rebuttals founded in common sense. Vern Ravenscroft, during the quarrel over the Birds of Prey Area, predicted that "the people of Idaho will suffer," for in his view, the government had grown too powerful and was ignoring the needs of the common people. Certainly, Ravenscroft had company. Ranchers joined the ranks of the malcontents, as did developers, as did anyone who felt Idaho could not afford to spare desert acreage for wildlife.[363]

Those who wish to exploit natural resources use economic hardship as their first line of defense. Like any powerful argument, theirs carries the validity that Idahoans

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[361] "Senator Church Persists in Wilderness Bill Support: Idaho Will Give Him a Definite Answer Next Election," *The Idaho Statesman,* 8/27/1961.
[362] Frank Church, "Wilderness in a Balanced Land Use Framework," pg 3, University of Idaho Wilderness Research Center, 3/21/1977. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 1, Folder 10.
[363] Ann D. Kirkwood, "Group vows to fight Birds of Prey move," *U.P. International,* 11/26/1980. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 11, Folder 6.

need jobs. The need for jobs has long proven the staunchest opposition to wilderness protection. Trueblood identified these opponents as Boise Cascade Corporation, the Idaho Mining Association, Idaho Water Users Association, Idaho Farm Bureau, Idaho Cattlemen's Association, and Idaho Woolgrowers. While others have joined their ranks since Trueblood's day, his assessment of their motives applies to the newcomers as well: "the opposition steams chiefly from the old and deeply ingrained frontier ethic: Chop it down, use it up, make a dollar."[364] The irrigators and power companies that profit from the loss of wild rivers and wildlife receive support and accolades for their efforts, and little blame for depriving the public of their rights and resources. Andrus found it necessary to "educate the Idaho Public Utility Commission" on how to defend the public health, and to stand up to the Idaho Power Company.[365] Development and hydroelectricity had held first priority for so long that the Commission could not even begin to put the public first.

Children today can hardly imagine that grandparents and great-grandparents lived in towns so isolated that they might never have met a person of another race, nor even heard the basic tenets of any religion other than their own. Idahoans, today, may never have known that their great-grandparents struggled to survive while thinking of themselves, as Greenwood did, as "farmers, that hated class," whose government enforced policies that kept them poor.[366] The symbol of American agriculture,

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[364] Ted Trueblood, "Unique Wilderness Threatened."
[365] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style*, 63.
[366] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 10.

Jefferson's yeoman farmer, overshadows the shabbier truths of generation after generation of poor farming families, no better than any medieval peasant.

Technology, today, connects Americans socially, intellectually, and literally with the whole nation, even with other nations. Education and diversity grant people the liberty to define the belief system and lifestyle they desire, even pursue the career, hobbies and dreams that appeal to them. A hundred, or even fifty, years ago, people born into poor rural families found themselves afforded with only the choices their family could grant, usually very few. The poverty and isolation that gripped the majority of Idaho's citizens defined Idahoans' lives. A life spent in the same small town, attending a single church, exposed only to the belief system of one's relatives, offered only what opportunities a farming community could afford and thus contributed to the discontent that Idahoans remain infamous for. "We have been maligned and mistreated in the national press as a refuge and promised land for racists, white supremacists, and antigovernment extremists," wrote Cecil Andrus.[367]

A closer look reveals that Idahoans have another identity, a better self laboring behind the mask of the anti-federal malcontent. Karl Brooks identified 1948-1958 as years of significant change in Idaho. In the early rounds of the Hells Canyon fight Idahoans had fared poorly, and no one among Fish and Game, outdoor sportsmen, or even Native American groups stood up to fight. By 1959 twenty five different groups voiced protest and began finding ways to legally stand in the government's way.

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[367] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style*, 166.

Idahoans took the lessons of Hells Canyon very much to heart: opposition to federal decisions must take place *before* the government has taken action. The Administrative Procedures Act (APA) of 1946 proved an effective tool employed by those who would slow, and even halt, government development of wild lands.[368] Idaho lawyer Bruce Bowler led the way in using existing laws and policies to protect the environment. Additionally, Bowler recognized the unique legal position of Native Americans and the ways in which their rights could extend to protection of wilderness and wildlife. Idahoans served as a sterling example of American determination, in Brooks' view that Americans use politics to get their way.[369] Perhaps, in that light, Idahoans do not deserve a reputation for anti-federalism, perhaps they deserve recognition for their eagerness to defend what rights they have before they lose the chance.

Idahoans have had the benefit of civic-minded leadership that took the rights of their inheritors into mind. In support of public lands and parks, Governor Smylie said, "These are assets that we must save – literally hold in trust for the use and recreation of the generations yet to come."[370] Residents wrote to their local editors in support of preservation, as Dan Taylor from Nampa, who felt "It is more than justified to preserve the Birds of Prey Natural Area simply to protect the tremendous number of raptors which depend on the area."[371] A Boise rally held in support of the Birds of Prey Area expansion attracted 500 Idahoans who heard a Nez Perce tribe member declare, "It is now left to the

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[368] Stapilus, *Paradox Politics*, 41.
[369] Brooks, "It Happened in Hells Canyon."
[370] "Yellowstone Points the Way, Smylie Says," *The Idaho Statesman,* 5/17/1964.
[371] "Idaho cannot afford to lose refuge," *The Idaho Statesman,* 12/24/1980.

people to combat this narrow-minded greed." Conservationist and State Senator Ken Robison identified a pro-raptor rally as "the first time the people of a Rocky Mountain state stood up and said they want to stand up for the land."[372] Not just rally attendees, but concerned Idahoans across the state spoke up on a variety of environmental issues. Hailey resident James M. Cogan wrote to the *Statesman* to contest the Sagebrush Rebellion, recounting a thwarted hiking expedition in the Lake Tahoe area where private ownership prohibited the public from venturing near Royal Gorge. Private owners "had appropriated an entire scenic mountain watershed for themselves and the public was locked out," wrote Cogan, warning that Idahoans hoping for fewer regulations during hunting season would not see their wishes fulfilled by a Sagebrush Rebellion victory.[373]

As Frank Church discovered, Idahoan values could evolve, given enough time. By the late 1960s he observed, "if it is really a choice of conservation or their job, they'll take their job; but as long as it is sensible conservation and propaganda about loss of their jobs that they can sort out, they'll take conservation."[374] Though the difficulty, as Church himself well knew, lay in "trying to find the proper balance between needed development of our nation's resources to maintain full employment and prosperity on the one hand and improve and preserve the quality of human life and the environment on the other."[375] Church himself proved instrumental in preserving 3.87 million acres of wilderness;

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[372] Rod Gramer, "Sage Rebellion rapped at rally," *The Idaho Statesman,* 1/27/1981.
[373] James M. Hogan, "Rebellion's possible winners," *The Idaho Statesman,* 2/21/1981.
[374] Ewert, *The Conversion of Senator Frank Church,* 86.
[375] Ibid., 131.

Idahoans named a 2.3 million acre wilderness after him.[376] Cecil Andrus did speak truthfully when he said, "we've always had an unhealthy supply of right-wing kooks in Idaho."[377] Industry, too, has left an indelible mark upon the state, as the likes of J. R. Simplot, chief among Idaho's magnates, had no qualms about his blatant disregard for environmental standards. Simplot defended his pollution staunchly, declaring that he had built a plant along the river precisely for the purpose of dumping trash in it.[378] The stereotype, of ranchers killing wolves, of hunters disobeying private property signs, of farmers polluting water systems, of right-wing kooks finding refuge in Idaho's rural communities, all have a foundation in truth. Idaho has many truths. Edward Abbey wrote, "We need wilderness whether or not we ever set foot in it… we need the possibility of escape as surely as we need hope."[379] That need reflects how Idahoans, so many of them the rural poor, can afford naught but wilderness for escape, for recreation, for something with which to gift their children. For many Idahoans, wilderness is the only treasure they will ever have. They, stereotyped and misunderstood, value nature as others cannot, they have nothing else worth taking, and those wanting to take it are usually federal officials, or politicians from states with far more clout than Idaho.

Annie Pike Greenwood confirmed John Wesley Powell's grim prediction when she opined that "Our Government, whose basic shibboleth is that all men are created

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[376] Ewert, *The Conversion of Senator Frank Church*, 236.
[377] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style,* 20.
[378] Ibid., 22.
[379] Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 99.

equal, has spent untold millions of dollars to degrade one class of its citizens."[380] Half a century later, Idahoans have evolved into stubborn, suspicious, anti-federal mavericks who refuse to cooperate with each other very often, and never with government regulations if they can find a way out of it. As Andrus put it, "no living creature in Idaho, be it on two legs or four, is known for obedience or passivity."[381] They remain unwelcoming of outsiders and unwilling to institute changes for their own benefit. Greenwood, her bitterness still sharp generations later, wrote, "we had invested a pitchfork and shovel – and our lives. We had condemned ourselves to unremitting labor in the sagebrush wilderness for this reward."[382] Their religion told them they were doing God's work, their government told them their dreams could come true. Then, first generation farm families lost everything through government-regulated pricing during World War I, or survived that trial to face ruin during the Great Depression. The desert forced them to cooperate in irrigation if they wanted to survive, and the New Deal forced them to resist federal policy to control what they perceived as theirs. The government that had stood aside while the Bureau of Reclamation and Union Pacific coaxed them into settling the desert was the same government that had regulated prices to the farmers' downfall, and the same government that failed to prevent industrial contamination from poisoning Idaho water.

Another look at what appeals to Idahoans reveals much about their general character. When Bruce Bowler supported the creation of the Sawtooth National Park, he

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[380] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 469.
[381] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style*, 36.
[382] Greenwood, *We Sagebrush Folks,* 140.

admitted to sportsmen that wildlife preservation might indeed supersede the rights of hunters, but that "it would not be fair, or properly considerate of others, in the true spirit of good sportsmanship, to insist that the National Park be opposed because of the loss of hunting privileges." He went on to affirm that his support of the Park stemmed from "good citizenship."[383] Through no coincidence did Bowler, a lawyer, choose such terms. He knew that Idahoans valued such qualities as sportsmanship and citizenship, just as politicians throughout the generations knew that reminding Idahoans of their children's heritage would give them pause. For their shortsightedness in other areas, Idahoans place a certain premium upon their unique brand of fairness. When Frank Church called upon Idahoans to oppose the Sagebrush Rebellion, he knew they would respond to "That's not the kind of Idaho I want to pass on to our grandchildren. Help me prevent it from happening."[384] Evoking the legacy left to deserving descendents and asking for neighborly help, those are the tactics that work with people who understand a sense of obligation.

The newcomers in Idaho have come, as Thomas Power (chairman of the Economics Department at the University of Montana) found, for the higher quality of life afforded by Idaho's outdoor recreation opportunities. "People took significant risks and made significant sacrifices to obtain the living environments they wanted."[385] His words apply, too, to native Idahoans. They remain in rural towns, working for low wages,

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[383] Bruce Bowler, "Why a Sawtooth National Park," Bonneville Sportsmen's Association Conservation Clinic, March 11, 1960." Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 1, Folder 9.
[384] Senator Frank Church, "Maintaining Idaho's Quality of Life," p. 15, 10/20/1980. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 6, Folder 6.
[385] Barker, *Saving All the Parts*, 219-220.

because of their ties to community and tradition, because of their attunement to their environment. In Church's generation, he described how, "despite the raging editorials, the united efforts of the user groups, the scare talk, a majority of the people wanted a part of our fast-vanishing wilderness saved."[386] Church proved that asking Idahoans what they wanted made them less angry, volatile, and reactionary. He proved that, despite their insecurities over employment, Idahoans would yield to appeals like that from Ray Fisher (Conservation Chairman for the Federation of Fly Fisherman) when he wrote, "The existence of various interests in Snake River water is recognized but we must observe that no user interest, present or potential, should be in a position to exert excessive demands… to the detriment of others."[387]

Idaho's harsh landscape taught its people the importance of cooperation and gifted them with a sense of duty to one another even as it taught them self-reliance. For most native Idahoans, their stubbornness and their dislike of government survive as their heritage from their grandparents. They are often cantankerous, and difficult for outsiders to understand, yet they are just as often fair-minded. They are willing to defend one another and to defend, in their fashion, the environment. Sometimes, it takes someone like Ted Trueblood to remind them that "The Idaho loggers are vociferous, but they don't own the land or the trees upon it… it belongs to all of us. You have as much right to say

[386] Frank Church, "Wilderness in a Balanced Land Use Framework," p. 5, University of Idaho Wilderness Research Center, 3/21/1977. Ted Trueblood Collection, MSS 89, Box 1, Folder 10.
[387] Ray W. Fisher, "Cleaner Water and Brighter Streams are our Goal," 11/2/1973. Frank Church Papers, MSS 56, Box 69, Folder 2.

what will be done with it as does the logger."[388] Idahoans need the reminder of how much the environment is worth and that they can, and indeed should, protect it from the self-serving demands on industry.

It takes forthright politicians to guide constituents through the maze of fears created by profiteers. Threats to job security and anti-federalism turn Idahoans away from supporting conservation. Too often, Idaho's elected politicians are not of Andrus' and Church's mindset. Too often, Idaho officials, like Republican Representative Helen Chenoweth, possess no regard for nature. As Andrus explained: "In her 1994 campaign, Idaho's intellectually challenged Representative Helen Chenoweth wondered why salmon can be considered an endangered species when you can buy canned salmon at Albertson's. What obtuseness, what stupidity."[389] Besides their disregard for nature, Idaho's conservative politicians maintain their contradictory relationship to the federal government. On April 1, 2009, *The Idaho Statesman* ran an article entitled "Idaho to feds: Butt out, but give us money." The article explained that "The State Senate Affairs Committee… approved two measures, one telling Washington, D.C., to quit passing laws that force states to comply with threats of civil penalties or loss or funding, another asking federal lawmakers to 'provide federal funding for the delivery of the Doctor of Medicine degree in this state.'" Senator Kate Kelly, a Boise Democrat, said that the

[388] Ted Trueblood, "To Pay a Debt," Outdoor America, March/April 1978. Fred Hutchison Papers, MSS 124, Box 7, Folder 5.
[389] Andrus and Connelly, *Cecil Andrus: Politics Western Style,* 108.

measures should not pass without noting the conflicting messages, which *The Idaho Statesman* identified as "cognitive dissonance."[390]

That dissonance has long been a part of Idahoan identity. Conflict, from the deadly ditch bank battle between settlers Grover and Koury, to the murders committed by Claude Dallas, to disputes between canal companies, and to communities divided over mining pollution, has determined the Idahoan way of life. Idahoans, some valuing jobs over nature, others valuing quality of life over employment, all suspicious of federal government, cannot agree how to manage their natural resources. While they quarrel, special interests and ignoble politicians wreak environmental havoc in the name of profit. Idahoans, many lacking higher education or access to broader perspectives, cannot hear the truths obscured by well-told lies. Without leaders like Church or Andrus, they are led into environmental ruin by those who exploit in the name of profit. Without leaders who serve the public good, they are unable to identify a voice of reason, much less heed it.

Tourists, newcomers to Idaho, and modern scholars readily find fault with Idahoans. Idahoans, misunderstood and thus judged, turn away from such critics and ally themselves with those who continue to degrade the state's environment. Though, scholar Patricia Limerick's reminder applies poignantly to Idaho: "it has become commonplace to hear denunciations of the despoiling of Western resources, the rape of the land, the ecological and moral horror that was Western expansion, [but] it is important to remember this widely varying cast of characters, and to recall that many of these

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[390] "Idaho to feds: Butt out, but give us money," *The Idaho Statesman,* 4/1/2009.

'despoilers' wanted, primarily, to find a job and make a living."[391] For anyone hoping to change the state, they must understand that while some Idahoans are driven by greed, the majority of them are – like their grandparents - driven by insecurity. The strangeness of Idahoans' conservation politics shows its origin in the local reverence for water rights. The importance of water rights intensified proportionally to regional fears of federal control. The frustration of Idaho environmentalism remains in the undeniable value Idahoans place on nature, and the way that nature yet means less to them than tradition and their preference for local control. Those hoping to change Idaho can only do so in understanding Idahoans' past and their fears, and with that understanding, will achieve more with patience than with any amount of criticism.

[391] Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest,* 133.

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