

The proposed national recreation area is a land of singular beauty and exceptional capacity for providing outdoor recreation in a spacious and natural environment. We believe it meets all the basic criteria for a national recreation area and is fully worthy of congressional recognition of its outstanding qualities.

The Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture has protected and developed the resources on the lands under its administration with full recognition of their superlative qualities. We have provided both traditional recreation facilities and the wild and beautiful Sawtooth primitive area.

The use and management of the Sawtooth country has for many years been a matter of keen interest locally and nationally. From time to time, since 1911, there have been—as has been pointed out—proposals to give it some special status which would insure national recognition and provide for timely development of its multiple resources. In view of this continued interest, the Departments of Interior and Agriculture, in 1963, began an intensive study of the resources of the Sawtooth country and of the opportunities they offer to serve the recreation-seeking public, meet the needs of the Nation for wilderness, and contribute to the economy of the counties wherein they lie.

The study report suggested two alternative approaches. One alternative was national park status for the area. The report pointed out that establishment of a national park would make significant changes in the ownership pattern and uses in the area.

The other alternative proposed in this joint report was the establishment of a national recreation area. As such, the area would continue under the administration of the Forest Service. Fewer changes in ownership would be required. Many of the existing uses could be continued as compatible with the primary purpose for which the area would be administered. As a national recreation area, it could continue to be managed so as to conserve and develop its recreation resources.

In the 89th Congress, two bills—S. 3294 and S. 3295—concerning this area were introduced. One bill would have established a Sawtooth National Park; the other a Sawtooth National Recreation Area. Field hearings were held in Idaho on these two bills. The majority of those attending the hearings favored establishment of a national recreation area and continued administration by the Forest Service. S. 1267 would carry out this approach.

Scenically, the proposed recreation area offers magnificent views of the jagged Sawtooth Range, which is snowcapped a large part of the year, and other ranges of the Salmon River Mountains. Over 180 lakes and 42 peaks over 10,000 feet in elevation are in the existing Sawtooth primitive area. The Salmon River headwaters east of the primitive area provide hunting, fishing, many opportunities for camping, hiking, riding, and water sports in an environment characterized by spacious forests and beautiful lakes and streams.

Except for a relatively small area on the east side, the 351,000-acre area is within the boundaries of the Sawtooth, Challis, and Boise National Forests. It would include about 317,000 acres of national forest land, about 10,400 acres of public domain lands, about 1,600 acres of State, and about 22,400 acres of privately owned lands.