

The Idaho rivers involved are segments of the Salmon and the Clearwater. The Salmon, often called The River of No Return, rises in the high country of central Idaho, and many of its reaches churn through deep, steep-walled mountain canyons. It has enticed white water boatmen from throughout the world, eager to accept the challenge of boiling rapids remote from civilization.

Presently, there are no dams on the Salmon, and its complex of forks and smaller tributaries provide the last major spawning ground in the Columbia River watershed for anadromous fish—the migratory salmon and steelhead trout.

S. 119 includes only the Middle Fork of the Salmon. The 105 miles of this spectacular stream flow northward through the Idaho Primitive Area, its crystal-clear waters abundant in fish, and its rugged banklands abounding in wildlife.

In S. 119, the main Salmon River would be studied for possible future inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. During the final session of the 89th Congress, the Senate passed another wild rivers bill which I introduced, S. 1446. This bill, in final form, included, besides the Middle Fork, the Main Salmon downstream from the North Fork to its confluence with the Snake River.

As a result of recommendations by the Idaho Water Resource Board, the State agency charged with appraisal and planning of Idaho water resources, and of my colleague, Senator Jordan—and with my own endorsement—the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee agreed to amend S. 119 and place the main stem of the river in the study category with the added protection of another amendment which provided that no dams would be constructed on streams in the study group for a period of 5 years.

Mr. Chairman, I have long been concerned with the need for “balanced development” of our Idaho resources, with some of our rivers or their segments devoted to reclamation and the production of hydroelectric power, and others dedicated to recreation. I do not believe we should construct dams on the main Salmon as long as the fish-passage problem remains unsolved.

A dam on the mainstream of the river would halt the migration of salmon and steelhead into this great nursery and destroy the runs.

However, I do believe we should afford the Idaho Water Resource Board the opportunity to complete its study of the river. I also believe that the importance of the main Salmon as a recreation asset will increase considerably in the next few years, and I hope will lead to its eventual inclusion in the proposed national wild river system.

The second Idaho river proposed by S. 119 and other bills to be included in the initial system is the Middle Fork of the Clearwater and its two tributaries, the Lochsa and the Selway. This amounts to 186 miles of beautiful and historic mountain streams which are also prime spawning grounds for salmon and steelhead. It was down the ridges above the Lochsa and the Middle Fork that the explorers Lewis and Clark came in 1805 to reach the main Clearwater, which afforded them the first leg of a water route that led them all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Their most successful exploration gave the United States a valid claim to the Oregon country.