

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you, Senator Church and Senator Jordan.

Senator CHURCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator JORDAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. TAYLOR. There is agreement among the Idaho delegation.

Our next witness is John A. Baker, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Cliff, you will accompany him, will you not? Mr. Edward P. Cliff, Chief, Forest Service, Department of Agriculture.

STATEMENT OF JOHN A. BAKER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE; ACCOMPANIED BY EDWARD P. CLIFF, CHIEF, FOREST SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. BAKER. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Baker, we welcome you before the committee.

You may proceed.

Mr. BAKER. Thank you, sir.

We are glad to have this opportunity to speak to you about a scenic rivers system. This proposed nationwide system is an outgrowth of a joint study of America's scenic rivers initiated in 1963 by the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior. The bills before you would start us on our way to insuring protection of our remaining unspoiled rivers and streams.

In our August 11, 1967, report to your committee, we recommended that Chairman Aspinall's bill, H.R. 8416, be enacted, with certain amendments. These amendments are described in detail in our report. Their major purposes are to insure that the Secretary of Agriculture has appropriate responsibility whenever National Forest lands are involved, and to make the provisions of the bill consistent with ongoing resource programs of the Department of Agriculture.

Much of our national scenic rivers system will be managed and protected in connection with the National Forest System administered by the Forest Service. Over 400 miles of the rivers proposed for the initial system in H.R. 8416 are within the boundaries of the National Forests. These include the Salmon and Clearwater in Idaho, and the Rogue in Oregon.

Within the National Forests scenic waterways have long been administered in accord with the scenic rivers concept. The National Scenic Rivers Act will give congressional recognition to this type of management. More importantly, for National Forest lands, it will give statutory assurance that designated scenic rivers will remain free-flowing. We have the authority now to manage related land areas under sound conservation principles. We are able to fully protect the values of streambanks. By restricting the future construction of major river barriers, this legislation will make our ability to protect these streams complete.

The Department of Agriculture is vitally concerned with rural America. Scenic rivers are a part of the rural countryside—its economy and its environment. A national scenic rivers system will give rural Americans the opportunity to furnish facilities and services needed to enhance use and enjoyment of components of the scenic rivers system.