

STATEMENT OF C. R. GUTERMUTH, VICE PRESIDENT, WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT
INSTITUTE

Mr. Chairman, I am C. R. Gutermuth, vice president of the Wildlife Management Institute, with headquarters in Washington, D.C. The Institute is one of the older national conservation organizations, and its program has been devoted to the improved management of natural resources in the public interest for more than fifty years.

Like conservationists everywhere, we are pleased that the committee has scheduled a hearing on proposals relating to the North Cascades. We are deeply concerned about the North Cascades and the permanent maintenance of wilderness conditions there. Without question, the North Cascades comprise about the finest remaining great wilderness and scenic area of the contiguous United States. Few serious intrusions have been made there, although a number of projects have been suggested that could alter the wilderness character of large sections of the country. The entire area is being pressed by peripheral development, however, which will continue. The Congress, therefore, has an excellent opportunity to designate a large portion of the North Cascades for permanent wilderness protection. Never again will there be a better opportunity to preserve as much wilderness as there is now.

The overriding determinant in the Institute's reaction to the House and Senate bills is the preservation of wilderness. It is believed that much of the North Cascades should stay as they are, as wilderness, and that there should be a minimum of development of any kind. Here again, this development should be done only in designated areas, and the vast bulk of the pristine country should not be roaded or invaded by trams, funiculars, heliports, and anything of that kind. The area should be dedicated mostly to wilderness preservation.

Both the U.S. Forest Service, the agency that long has had administrative and managerial responsibility for much of the North Cascades, and the National Park Service are capable wilderness managers. Neither agency, it is believed, has such superior ability for wilderness management that would warrant the shifting of primary responsibility from one to the other. The most important question facing the Congress is the designation of the maximum amount of wilderness in the North Cascades, from the existing Glacier Peak Wilderness, north to the Canadian border, and to the west and the east so that all worthy areas are marked for protection. In any action that Congress takes, and conservationists hope that it will do so promptly, we strongly urge that maximum protection be given to wilderness, and that no opportunities are overlooked to eliminate and to minimize future potential sources of friction with that objective. Congress has the opportunity to resolve many of the most pressing threats against the North Cascades wilderness, including mining, which is the most serious in the Glacier Park Wilderness at this time.

The Institute wishes to express support for the establishment of a new wilderness national park to the west of Ross Lake in the Picket Range, providing for an appropriate setback from the lake for a national recreation area, and including Mt. Shukshan, but not the Mt. Baker Recreation Area. Such a park would cover about 330,000 acres. This land, of course, would be transferred from the Forest Service. While the Mt. Baker area contains superb scenery, it is much too developed to be included in a wilderness national park. Its principal purpose for many years has been for outdoor recreation, and we see no need to change that now. The area services a long-established outdoor recreation need.

We also wish to support the several recommendations that have been made for the creation of a new national recreation area, embracing both shores of Ross Lake, extending westward along the new cross-mountain highway to the approximate vicinity of Newhalem, and to the east to the approximate boundary recommended by the Forest Service in the North Cascades Report for the proposed Eldorado Peaks High Country. We would suggest further that the southern boundary of the national recreation area be along the line of a new Eldorado Wilderness Area to be created north of and adjoining the Glacier Peak Wilderness. Administration of the national recreation area, roughly extending along the cross-mountain highway could be by either the Forest Service or the National Park Service.

Under this suggestion, it is contemplated that the Eldorado Wilderness Area would be administered by the Forest Service. As stated earlier, the Institute's interest is in the preservation of wilderness, and if the Congress creates the new wilderness area that has been suggested, then we see no need to transfer the land to the National Park Service. Should it not be the desire of Congress to