

3-20-2012

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman, Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Chairman Wyden and fellow members of the Subcommittee on Public Lands and Forests of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify regarding S. 2001, a bill to expand the Wild Rogue Wilderness Area in the State of Oregon, and to provide additional protections for Rogue River tributaries via additional Wild and Scenic river designations in the lower Rogue River area. It is an honor to have this opportunity to speak in favor of this legislation.

My name is Dave Strahan. I was born, raised and still live in Grants Pass, Oregon. Grants Pass is a city with a population of around 35,000 people in a county of roughly 83,000 people. Grants Pass straddles the Rogue River in the heart of the Rogue Basin in Southern Oregon. The Rogue Basin is home to several other cities, larger and smaller, creating an area population of approximately 300,000 people.

The Rogue River's headwaters begin near Crater Lake, a national treasure in its own right. It then flows 215 miles through the mountains and valleys of southwestern Oregon, eventually emptying into the Pacific Ocean near the town of Gold Beach.

The steep, rugged basin, stretching from the western flank of the Cascade Range to the northeastern flank of the Siskiyou Mountains varies in elevation from 9,485 feet at the summit of McLaughlin in the Cascades to sea level, where it meets the ocean.

The Rogue has long been an international draw for tourists. It has also provided sanctuary for many notable celebrities over the years. I have my mother's 1943 Grants Pass High School year book with Clark Gable's autograph in it. Our river has provided inspiration for George Foreman, Zane Grey and countless other river lovers. Zane Grey proclaimed the historic beauty of this area, and made it his part time home. "The happiest lot of any angler" wrote Grey "would be to live somewhere along the banks of the Rogue River, the most beautiful stream of Oregon."

The Rogue has been an integral element in my family's life for generations. In the late 1800's my great grandparents on my father's side homesteaded on a tributary of the Rogue, just a few miles south of Grants Pass. My grandparents on my mother's side moved to Grants Pass in 1927 and built Kamp Kathleen, a motor court named after my mother that catered to salmon fishermen, as well as other tourists.

Growing up, the Rogue and its watershed provided my family and me with countless hours of enjoyment and outdoor recreation. Family camping, fishing, hunting and boating is just what we did when I was growing up, as was the case with most of my peers. Many of my fondest memories include time spent on or near our river, and I continue to create those memories today, with my own family. As a sort of rite of passage, I made my first raft trip down the lower Rogue canyon as a 16th birthday present in 1969 with my older brother Mike. Since then, I have made hundreds of trips down our river and have had the pleasure of introducing many, many awestruck visitors to our special place.

When I graduated from high school in 1972, the majority of my friends moved to larger cities to take

advantage of more varied education and employment opportunities. My love of the Rogue, its watersheds and all that they have to offer, compelled me to stay in the Rogue valley to create my life and raise my family. My oldest daughter will make me a grandfather in May and my youngest graduates from high school this spring. When I die, I hope to leave a Rogue River that my kids, my grandkids and their peers can continue to build memories around for generations to come.

While studying business administration and marketing for four years at what is now Southern Oregon University in Ashland, Oregon, another Rogue basin community, I began selling sporting goods as a retail clerk part time in 1975. Since that time, I have made my living and supported my family selling outdoor recreation equipment in the sporting goods industry. I have the best job in the world, selling the tools for the activities I so enjoy and that have been such a large part of my life, in one of the most beautiful and bountiful regions of our great nation.

Since 1995 I have proudly been a territory salesman for Big Rock Sports, the largest distributor of sporting goods in the nation. Big Rock Sports, headquartered in Morehead City, North Carolina, provides well- paying jobs all across our country with facilities in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Montana, California and Oregon. We partner with and help support thousands of small family businesses throughout every state in our country, and proudly represent the values and culture that are such an important part of our country's heritage and quality of life.

But my passion for being here today is not only about me, my career and my love of the Rogue and all it has to offer. I am also here today representing the 110 plus Oregon businesses and organizations that support expansion of the Wild Rogue Wilderness and Wild and Scenic protections on the Rogue. I also speak for the Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association, a northwest industry group made up of approximately 300 outdoor recreation businesses in the Pacific Northwest. Additionally, I am on the Stream Restoration Alliance of the Middle Rogue's board of Directors. The Stream Restoration Alliance, a watershed council dedicated to restoring urban streams through volunteer efforts, is also supporter of the proposed legislation.

Other organizations representing thousands of people across southwest Oregon and throughout our region – such as the Middle Rogue Steelheaders, the Native Fish Society, the Oregon Council of Trout Unlimited and the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations – have thrown their support behind our Rogue River and the proposed legislation.

Besides just the business and outdoor recreation communities, a recent poll conducted in rural southwestern Oregon by Moore Polling showed that 77% of those polled support protection of Rogue River tributaries. Even when told the details of the proposal and what it would disallow, the majority still support expansion of the Wild Rogue Wilderness. Pollster Bob Moore observed: "The majority of voters clearly favor additional protection..."

Also, as part of an unprecedented agreement negotiated by conservation organizations and the American Forest Resource Council (AFRC), a timber industry association, AFRC agreed not to oppose this legislation. Tom Partin of AFRC was quoted in the Grants Pass Daily Courier on May 25, 2010, "The area you view from the Rogue River is not going to be (logged). A lot of it is too rugged and wild. There is not a lot of timber value that we would be giving up if it went into wilderness values."

Bear in mind that the Rogue River is the largest producer of Pacific salmon in Oregon outside of the Columbia River, with historically 100,000 salmon and steelhead returning from the ocean each year. Rogue River salmon and steelhead travel great distances along the Oregon and northern California

coasts and support a significant portion of our ocean salmon fisheries. With that, they also provide the backbone for sport and commercial fishing economies worth billions of dollars annually to our west coast. The very tributaries under consideration in this piece of legislation are essential to the future of these fish and the sustainable economy they support. Salmon and steelhead need and thrive on the clear, cold water that these tributaries provide.

A 2009 economic study by ECONorthwest, an economic analyst group, estimates the economic benefits generated from fishing, white water rafting, (just over 13,000 people floated the lower Rogue in 2007) and hiking, (5,000 people hike along the Rogue River in the proposal area on average), occurring entirely within the proposal area to be \$18.1 million in economic activity and nearly 300 full and part-time jobs annually. When one considers the economic ripple effect in terms of restaurants, gas stations, grocery stores and motels, it is clear that the outdoor recreation industry is a very substantial contributor to our economy. While tourism may not support our entire economy, the diversity it brings certainly adds to the stability of our economy.

There are millions of dollars more in benefits associated with the quality of life in the region provided by a clean, attractive river corridor with healthy fish runs and intact watersheds. My Rotary group, Gateway Rotary, recently heard a presentation from the CEO of Three Rivers Hospital in Grants Pass. He explained to us how when recruiting doctors and other health care professionals, our river and the wild areas around it are important elements in luring these folks to our community. In my eight years serving on the Three Rivers School District Board of Directors, I was a part of many hiring committees for Administrators, and our outdoor quality of life was a very large factor in attracting applicants. These professionals all contribute to our economy, often with more discretionary income than others. An investment in our Wild and Scenic Rogue is an investment in the stability of our economy.

The Rogue Basin's local economy, culture and heritage is based on the Rogue River and its supporting watersheds. With all of this in mind, it is with great passion and a great deal of empathy for the hundreds of business people in our region, as well for our quality of life in the Rogue Basin and the entire Pacific Northwest, that I urge you to advance S. 2001 and work to insure that our irreplaceable Rogue River and its supporting watersheds are protected for future generations.

Thank you for your time. And once again, I thank Senator Wyden and all of you, for the opportunity to speak on behalf of something so profoundly important to us all.

Sincerely,

Dave Strahan