(Public Hearing, Challis Idaho, October 1, 1997)

MR. STRICKLER: Five minutes as a county commissioner is not very long to express the desires of all these people that I represent. So if there is a chance at some point I could have extra time, I would like to have that. My name is Ted Strickler, chairman of the county commissioners, Custer County, 7 S-T-R-I-C-K-L-E-R. 9 Before I go on with my main testimony, which 10 will probably be cut short because of this response, I want to respond to Tom France's from the National 11 12 Wildlife Federation Citizen Management Program. I happened to testify in Washington, D.C., at Helen Chenoweth's grizzly bear hearing. The Fish and Wildlife 14 made a statement, and it's a matter of record, you can 15 16 get it. I have asked for this document to be sent to Challis and we will receive that. They were asked whether or not they would consider the people of Idaho's 19 feelings when they decide whether or not to put the 20 grizzly bear into Challis, Idaho. We were told probably not, very arrogant. We also asked whether or not the citizen 23 committee would have any authority. The citizen 24 committee by their own words has no authority, they are

25 absolutely a group to give some kind of comments and 73

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1 help. But Bruce Babbitt by their own words has the
2 option to disband this citizens' committee or to
3 override any decisions they make. Those are recorded
4 words in Washington, D.C. So when you think about this
5 citizen management program, guys, you better think about
6 how strong that citizen group is, it's not very good.
7 Anyhow, to go on with my other response, the
8 governor of Idaho opposes the grizzly bear. The Idaho
9 legislature opposes the grizzly bear, the Idaho
10 Department of Fish and Game says no, the Idaho
11 Association of Counties says no, Custer County says no,
12 and we believe Idaho says no.

I am going to read a little comment here that somebody wrote. It says what part of no don't you understand. We don't want grizzly bears roaming through our land. We'll be glad to explain, it's not hard to comprehend. What part of no don't you understand?

As public officials we are really first bound to support and protect the health, safety and welfare of our citizens and all other users. The Frank Church Wilderness is possibly the only area of this county where people, especially families of children, can have a true wilderness experience without the fear for their safety and the mental freedom to enjoy a total

wilderness experience without the threat of wild animals

such as the unpredictable, easily provoked, bad-attitude grizzly bear.

With the introduction of the wolf this has changed some as people are now expressing their fear in some areas of even letting their small children and their pets play outside. What is it going to be like with the grizzly bear? The citizens of Custer County have presented their commissioners with petitions that contain over 1,350 signatures demanding us to do whatever is necessary to protect them and their property from the grizzly. What would you do? I believe we the commissioners are committed to do exactly that, with all the power and authority we have.

14 We are concerned about the economy of the 15 state, also. We believe that the grizzly bear is going 16 to create an impact on the economy in many areas. We 17 have already been heavily impacted by this Endangered 18 Species Act; because of listing species in our area, grazing has been cut, logging curtailed, mining is heavily regulated and even recreation has been 20 affected. 21

I am going to skip to some other -- I have got 22 23 lots of good stuff -- it takes forever to tell what is 24 wrong --

HEARING OFFICER: But you only have five

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MR. STRICKLER: Some visitors and users of our area are already expressing that the introduction of the grizzly bear here will probably keep them from using the area from now on. There is also the greater fear, I think, that's larger than the fear of the bear, that's the fear of the heavy hand of the government that's going to administer this bear.

(Applause.)

MR. STRICKLER: When a bear gets killed, you 10 11 collect a hundred thousand dollars for the bear, find the man; if a child gets killed, they get nothing.

Where is the value system here?

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