



JAMES E. RISCH

United States Senator for Idaho

NEWS RELEASE

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RISCH CASTS FIRST FLOOR VOTE IN U.S. SENATE

Washington, D.C. – Senator Jim Risch cast his first floor vote in the U.S. Senate at an unusual time – Sunday afternoon. The cloture vote, which ended debate on S. 22, came at 2 p.m.

Senator Risch cast a “yes” vote to end debate on a public lands bill that contains several items important to Idaho. Those items include setting aside a portion of the Owyhee Canyonlands as wilderness, funding for several water project studies in southern Idaho, conveying 165 acres of BLM land to the City of Twin Falls, and adding Morley Nelson’s name to the Birds of Prey Conservation Area.

“I am very pleased that my first vote in the U.S. Senate was in support of Senator Crapo’s Owyhee Initiative,” said Risch. “Like the roadless proposal that I worked on as Governor, this land use legislation is the result of a long collaborative effort by local elected officials, ranchers, recreationists, conservationists, and tribes. The resulting bill protects the livelihood of working ranch families, and provides certainty for recreationists and important cultural resources, as well as outstanding scenic backcountry areas.”

The Owyhee Initiative began over eight years ago and designates 517,000 acres of BLM land as wilderness. The legislation will release 199,000 acres of land that was in the wilderness study area and will be classified as multiple use.

The bill also contains funding for water project studies by the Bureau of Reclamation throughout southern Idaho. The feasibility studies include adding new reservoir storage in the Snake River basin area and adding dams in several watersheds.

Risch said funding for the study projects would provide answers on the feasibility of proposals that have been discussed for some time.

“This funding provides for environmental and cost-benefit analysis on several potential projects. Water storage is critical in southern Idaho and the work will provide needed facts before we begin the debate on determining if we should build a project or not,” Risch said.

The bill also transfers 165 acres of BLM land to the city of Twin Falls. The land will be used for the Auger Falls project, which will be a community park and recreation area.

The Birds of Prey area will also get a new name to honor the late raptor expert, Morley Nelson. The bill authorizes the change to the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area.

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