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Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, during the recess of the U.S. Congress, the Secretary of Agriculture announced that the U.S. Forest Service would adjust its regional organization to fit with the standard Federal regional structure. I wish to take this opportunity to let my colleagues here in the Senate know that I am unalterably opposed to this plan. The present structure is adequate and conforms to the major areas of U.S. forestry activity in the United States. As we all know, Forest Service activity is concentrated in several different areas of the continental United States and is not uniform throughout. Therefore, I think it is ridiculous that it be required to conform with the standard Federal regional structure. Timber is a renewable resource and requires on the ground management.

Region I is one of the most active forest areas in the Nation and to move a regional office at a time when there is a greater demand for increased timber sales and management activities is difficult to understand. The rationale behind this plan obviously does not include efficiency and effectiveness because of such large distances involved. The Federal officials who devised this plan apparently have never been outside of New York City or Washington, D.C., and are not aware of the vast distances in the West. If you will look at the map, you will find that Missoula, Mont., presently the headquarters for region I, is approximately 800 to 900 miles from Denver. The proposed regional setup announced by Secretary Butz places 10 States within region C and the two large forest areas at opposite ends. I do not see how any efficient administrative plan can handle such a situation. Transportation services between Missoula and Denver and Portland, Ore., headquarters of region A, are very bad and there is no direct air service. What is to happen at the research facilities at Missoula—the smokejumpers school, the Forest Service Fire Research Laboratory, and associated facilities that are operating at Montana's two universities in Bozeman and Missoula.

Adding these additional Forest Service activities to the regional complex in Denver only compounds what is a serious and growing problem for this midcontinent city. This seems to be contrary to everything the administration is attempting to do in returning the governmental process to the local level. This action and others merely creates a larger bureaucratic monster in Denver.

Missoula, Mont., is a beautiful city with a moderate climate and home of one of Montana's two universities. There is absolutely no reason why personnel would not wish to maintain their present residencies in this community.

Mr. President, rumors have come to my attention that the Montana congressional delegation has agreed to this move of the regional headquarters because of a compromise reached between the delegation and the administration. Supposedly, Malmstrom Air Force Base, one of the most important Strategic Air
Command bases in the continental United States is to be preserved and managed as if we agreed to the closing of the Forest Service Regional Office in Missoula. I wish to state here and now that I was not a party to any such discussion in conjunction with the administration’s plan to reduce federal activity. Both the regional headquarters of the U.S. Forest Service and its associated activities in Missoula and the Strategic Air Command Base at Malmstrom are necessary and vital parts of our Federal activity.

I am also greatly concerned about reports that the Secretary of Agriculture has placed a muzzle on Forest Service personnel who disagree with this plan. The Forest Service has traditionally been one of the most active agencies involved in the development of timber resources. The administration will be unable to present their views effectively to the official who will make the decisions.

"The transfer of management from the immediate vicinity of programs and from the center of the resources will only result in mismanagement and additional bureaucratic red-tape."

Another important factor, according to the Montana Senators, is that the citizens living in the Forest Service area will not be able to present their views effectively to the officials who will make the decisions.

"Instead, they will have to travel some 800 miles to Denver to present their views, which in our opinion is not in line with the Nixon Administration’s policy directive that the government should be close to the people."

The Senators said that there would be a reduction of impounded funds and further hampered the proper management of their agency. At the present, the administration has made many demands for new timber sales and management problems and programs and who have first-hand knowledge and experience will now be required to make decisions in an urban area far from the forest resources they must manage.

"The transfer of management from the immediate vicinity of programs and from the center of the resources will only result in mismanagement and additional bureaucratic red-tape."

"This Administration doesn’t want citizen participation in decision-making process on managing the resources of our national forests."

"This effective team must not be dismantled,” the Senators said. "Instead, it would be economically sound to continue the various forest service and university facilities in the same community, and near the center of the resource that they must protect and manage for our benefit and for future generations."

"We will fight this move. We will not stand by and approve a closure decision made by a so-called management expert who doesn’t know the difference between chip wood and a tree."

[News from U.S. Department of Agriculture]

FOREST SERVICE TO ADJUST REGIONAL STRUCTURE

WASHINGTON, April 24.—The Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, will adjust its regional organization to fit within the standard federal regional structure, Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz announced today.

Secretary Butz said the change in organization will require phasing out of regional offices at Missoula, Mont.; Albuquerque, N.M.; and Ogden, Utah; and experiment station headquarters at Ogden, Utah, and Asheville, N.C.; and to closer coordination with the federal, state and local governments will be Improved through closer coordination with the federal regional councils.

The present Forest Service organization includes nine national forest system regional offices, eight experiment station headquarters offices and two state and private forestry offices. With the change, the system will be realigned into six regions, six experiment stations and two state and private forestry offices.

Full regional office status will continue at Atlanta, Ga.; Milwaukee, Wis.; Denver, Colo.; San Francisco, Calif.; Portland, Ore.; and Juneau, Alaska. Experimental station headquarters will be continued at Upper Darby, Pa.; St. Paul, Minn.; New Orleans, La.; Ft. Collins, Colo.; Berkeley, Calif.; and Portland, Ore. The Forest Products Laboratory at Madison, Wis., and the Institute of Tropical Forestry in Puerto Rico will be maintained. The state and private area offices will remain at Upper Darby and Atlanta.

Secretary Butz said most other regional structures in the federal government now conform to the standard federal region concept, as a result of a government-wide effort directed by the Office of Management and Budget. He said the effort is geared to simplify and improve the ability of the federal government to provide service through conformance to the standard region concept.

Another factor considered in the decision, he said, is that the review being made by all federal agencies to determine where expenditures can be reduced. In addition to regional changes, he said, the Forest Service’s review will lead to national forest and ranger district headquarters consolidations, as well as changes in the agency’s headquarters office in Washington, D.C.