

**STATEMENT OF
DENVER P. BURNS
DIRECTOR, ROCKY MOUNTAIN RESEARCH STATION
USDA - FOREST SERVICE**

before

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
UNITED STATES SENATE**

concerning

S. 3039, BOISE LABORATORY REPLACEMENT ACT OF 2000

September 26, 2000

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on S. 3039, the Boise Laboratory Replacement Act of 2000. I am Denver Burns, Director of the Rocky Mountain Research Station, USDA - Forest Service.

S. 3039 authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to sell a Forest Service administrative site occupied by the Rocky Mountain Research Station located in Boise, Idaho, and use the proceeds derived from the sale to purchase interests in a multi-agency research and education facility to be constructed by the University of Idaho. The Department of Agriculture

supports S. 3039 in the form of authorization legislation only and with additional clarifying language noted below

The Boise Forestry Science Laboratory of the Rocky Mountain Research Station is located in downtown Boise, Idaho on 3.26 acres owned by the Forest Service. The area surrounding the lab is experiencing rapid growth and development of retail space, offices and condominiums.

The Federal government-owned complex was built in the 1940s. It consists of eight buildings – two office buildings with labs, a modular office building, a combination warehouse and lab, two unheated warehouses, a storage shed and a shop. It provides research lab and office space for approximately 40 permanent and seasonal employees. The facilities minimally meet the unit's current needs. However, upgrading the facilities would allow researchers to enjoy enhanced collaborative and partnership opportunities while providing them with state of the art workspace. Due to the age and condition of the existing facilities, some members of the community consider it an “eye-sore” in light of the new development around the site. If the site were transferred to the private sector, we expect that the buildings would be razed and new buildings constructed.

The Rocky Mountain Research Station is willing to vacate the site and move to other facilities, but we feel that it is essential to maintain a research presence in Boise. The Boise Lab scientists work closely with the Intermountain Region national forests, as well as State and other Federal agencies in Idaho, many headquartered in Boise.

The University of Idaho has recently purchased a parcel of land adjacent to the Forest Service site. University personnel have approached Station managers with a concept for development of a joint Federal, State of Idaho, and University facility. The Administration supports this type of project since it fosters partnerships and collaboration with other agencies and scientists working on similar matters.

S. 3039 would authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to sell or exchange the Boise laboratory site and use the proceeds to acquire land and facilities to:

- (1) co-locate the laboratory with one of the Boise-area State institutions of higher learning;
- (2) replace other laboratory functions; and
- (3) acquire other land or interests in Idaho.

In addition, S. 3039 grants right of first refusal for the laboratory site to the University of Idaho or a related nonprofit

organization, and provides, if such option is exercised, for Federal cooperation with the University to develop a multi-agency research and education facility at the site.

The bill allows the Secretary of Agriculture the option of using the proceeds from the sale of the current laboratory site to acquire a “condominium interest” in the new facility. The condominium interest feature is similar to that which is used in residential development to allow the United States to maintain ownership of a portion of the real property that would be occupied by the Boise Lab within the site.

If the right of first refusal is not exercised by the University of Idaho, the bill allows the Secretary to solicit offers for competitive sale or exchange of the land for other suitable land within the State of Idaho.

We would like to work with committee staff on some minor adjustments in the bill language relating to the disposition of improvements, cash equalization, and the use of sale proceeds.

Closing

Mr. Chairman, the Department supports S.3039, Boise Laboratory Replacement Act of 2000, in the form of authorization legislation only and with a few minor technical corrections. We believe this bill provides the opportunity for the United States to proactively participate in the redevelopment of downtown Boise by replacing older facilities with new facilities that will efficiently meet future needs.

This concludes my statement, I would be happy to answer any questions you and the members of the subcommittee might have.