Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share the Administration’s views on S. 3294, the “Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act.”

We recognize the Idaho delegation has conducted a considerable amount of outreach and has worked collaboratively for a number of years with an array of communities of interest in the development of this bill, and we applaud their efforts.

I will limit my remarks to the provisions of the bill related to the lands and activities managed by the Forest Service, and will defer to the Department of the Interior on provisions relating to the lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

The Department of Agriculture supports S. 3294. However, we would like to work with the sponsor and subcommittee to address some concerns with the bill.

**TITLE I – Wilderness Designations**

Title I would add additional areas in central Idaho to the National Wilderness Preservation System – 110,370 acres in the Sawtooth and Challis National Forests to be known as the “Hemingway - Boulder Wilderness,” 90,888 acres in the Sawtooth and Challis National Forests to be known as the “White Clouds Wilderness,” and approximately 131,670 acres in the Salmon-Challis National Forest and Challis District of the Bureau of Land Management to be known as the “Jerry Peak Wilderness.”
Overall we support the designation of the Hemingway-Boulders, White Clouds and Jerry Peaks Wilderness areas as portrayed on the maps referenced in the bill. Most of the acres proposed for wilderness designation were recommended in their respective forest plans. The areas that were not recommended are either inventoried roadless areas, or their current management direction is compatible with Wilderness designation. The cherry-stem roads and trails are not ideal for wilderness management purposes, and we would like to work with the committee on some proposed adjustments.

Livestock grazing on the public lands designated as wilderness, and in the surrounding area, is addressed in section 102(e) of the bill. The Department of Agriculture supports this standard language on the management of livestock grazing on public lands within designated wilderness. Grazing can be a compatible use within wilderness, and there is a long history of legislation accommodating grazing within wilderness designations. However, we also recognize and support the proposal by the Idaho delegation to allow voluntary and permanent reductions in grazing in the designated areas. We would like to work with the sponsor and committee on technical issues with the language of Section 102(e)(2) regarding the donation of grazing permits.

TITLE II – Land Conveyances for Public Purposes
For 36 years, the federal government has made a strategic investment of more than $65 million in the Sawtooth NRA for acquisition of scenic or conservation easements to ensure that the purposes for which the NRA was established under Public Law 92-400 are achieved.

Section 201(a) would require the Forest Service to identify an appropriate site within the Sawtooth NRA and in the vicinity of the Smiley Creek community on which the Smiley Creek Rural Fire Protection District could construct and use a fire station. The agency would be authorized to issue a special use authorization for use of the site or, in the alternative, to convey the site to the District without consideration. We appreciate the flexibility offered under this provision, and look forward to working with the community of Smiley Creek to mutually determine a site that does not impair Sawtooth NRA values.

Section 201(b) would require the Forest Service to issue a special use authorization or convey without consideration a parcel of land in Blaine County for use as a school bus turnaround. The bus turnaround can be authorized without the need to convey the land. The Department also does not support the conveyance of land without consideration. This is consistent with the longstanding policy that the United States receives market value for the sale of National Forest Lands.

TITLE III – Travel Management
Section 301 of the bill would provide specific management direction for several trails. Two of the trails, Germania Creek and Frog Loop Lake, provide for motorized use, which is inconsistent with wilderness designation. We appreciate the establishment of the motorized corridor on acres not designated as wilderness. However, this establishes a motorized trail corridor, surrounded by Wilderness.
In general, the Forest Service prefers that the determination of how National Forest System trails will be managed, including types of uses allowed and trail design be determined through land management planning and site-specific National Environmental Policy Act processes. These processes work well because they allow for public participation, and allow for decision making to be made locally. It also allows us the flexibility to respond to user demand and resource issues.

We would also like to work with the committee on some other technical considerations, primarily related to the referenced trails, associated maps and proposed boundaries.

This concludes my prepared statement on S. 3294. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.