

Madam Chairman, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy in giving me time to speak on this bill.

I came to this, actually it was sort of interesting. Listening to my colleague, the gentleman from eastern Oregon (Mr. Walden), and the gentleman from California (Mr. George Miller), for whom I have the greatest respect and admiration, I must admit that I find myself in modest disagreement with them both.

I was one of those people that did not look at the action, the attention, the interest by Secretary Babbitt as a noose. I feel, with all due respect to my Republican colleagues, that this administration has been moving forward to attempt to protect precious jewels of resources throughout the country, and I think appropriately so. And I have been supportive of their efforts; and, candidly, at one of our early meetings, I was there to just say I did not think that monument status was a bad fallback position; and frankly, rather than a noose of Federal regulation, I am not prepared at this point to go into some debate, but I will be happy to do it with my colleague; and I am sure we will have opportunities on the campaign trail, about the Republican approach to environmental protection, hard rock mining, what has happened with grazing areas around the country; and frankly I think the vast majority of the American public supports greater protection, including many of the monument designations.

But what my friend from eastern Oregon approached, and I think rightly so, was the notion that we, because of the patchwork that has occurred in this area, in part historic accident, in part smart business practice, in part frankly we in government at all levels have been asleep at the switch, we had an opportunity to do something better. And I will add my voice and you will hear from other Members of the Oregon delegation who will come forward each with their own unique story about the treasure that is this wilderness that we are about, I hope, to designate today.

In fact, I could use all of my time, and I will not, just talking about the experience of going out at dawn on a spring morning far into the desert off a deserted road and watching the mating ritual of the sage grouse as the sun comes up. It is truly something that sends shivers down your spine and is something that is fragile in nature and something that is part of this heritage that we could lose.

And I would also take modest disagreement with my friend when he talked about this is not an area of high-tech millionaires, because it is truly a unique way of life in eastern Oregon, the ranching activities; but we have already seen that there are some of the high-tech millionaires that appreciate this. There have been sales pressures. I have visited with one gentleman in eastern Oregon recently who purchased an element that frankly we should find a way to add to the protection, because despite our vaunted land-use planning protections in Oregon, there is still much of this land that is at risk; there is much of this land that could in fact be developed in the future, and there is pressure for people to put not just mansions but massive structures which they legally would be entitled to do if we are not able to move forward in the future.

So while we are not threatened perhaps by traffic jams in this portion of eastern Oregon, we are not threatened by huge dot-com compounds that will be there, there is some of the new money, and some old money, that has the potential of disrupting this precious area.

That is why I must take modest exception to my friend from California, because there is in fact an urgency at moving forward. And because while there may not be some areas that fit perhaps into a cookie cutter approach for land valuation and exchanges, I am convinced that the package that has been developed here as a result of painstaking effort on behalf of a number of people, the tip of the iceberg was mentioned by the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. Walden), and they deserve that recognition and our thanks. But what was accomplished was a package that actually is fair value for priceless resources. And it was not something that the Oregon delegation signed off on. It was a vicious process of give-and-take, of hand-wringing, that resulted in drafting our approach for Oregonians.

In addition to acknowledging the efforts of my friend, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. Walden), I would like to acknowledge the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DeFazio), who stepped forward at a critical time. Sometimes he can be a little cranky. He saved it, he brought it in at the right moment, and I think he helped move some things forward. The administration, and especially Secretary Babbitt, who kept the eye on what our objective was. The people from the environmental community in Oregon hammered away at things that they held dear, and they are proud supporters of this legislation, from the American Lands Alliance, the Audubon Society, Columbia Gorge Audubon, Cybil Ackerman, Mark Salvo. I do not have time to go through everybody's name. I hope somebody will at the end.

But I guess I want to conclude by the notion that this is not just recapturing the heritage of what we have in eastern Oregon and crafting an Oregon solution as a team to something that is going to last for generations. I think this is an example of how this Congress should work, because as frustrated as I am frankly by the lack of environmental progress, I think we have

demonstrated today that people of disparate views could come together, one person looking at the threat of protection and somebody else looking like this was going to help us, but come together and make something that was better. And I would hope that not only would the House pass this legislation overwhelmingly; but I would hope that this would serve as a model that we could take forward to craft appropriate environmental solutions, break the logjam. There are a number of things that we could move forward with, and I think if we had the same sort of inclusive process that was demonstrated here, we could in fact reach the objections that have been advanced by our friend from California and be able to move forward with items that we can all take pride in.

Madam Chairman, I add my congratulations to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. Walden), the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DeFazio), our Senators and governor for making this possible.