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STEVEN J. MCCORMICK
President and Chief Executive Officer

September 19, 2006

The Honorable Michael D. Crapo
239 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Owyhee Initiative Implementation Act, S. 3974

Dear Senator Crapo:

The Nature Conservancy is pleased to support congressional passage of the Owyhee Initiative Implementation Act, S. 3974. This proposal is the result of a remarkable, five-year collaborative effort by Owyhee County, local ranchers, recreationists, conservationists, and the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes. The Conservancy has been privileged to serve on the Owyhee Initiative Work Group from the beginning.

The Owyhee and Bruneau canyonlands in southwestern Idaho are among the most visually stunning and ecologically significant landscapes of the American West. The legislation will designate the heart of these canyonlands as wilderness while protecting the livelihood of local ranching families – many of whom have been on the land for generations. Equally important are innovative provisions for better management of off-road vehicle use, cooperative law enforcement on public lands, protection of tribal cultural sites, and collaborative conservation and science projects. The Owyhee Initiative Implementation Act faithfully incorporates all of the components agreed to by the Owyhee Initiative Work Group. This legislation is a balanced solution that is good for the land and good for the people of Owyhee County. In order to provide you with a more thorough review of the workgroup's efforts, The Nature Conservancy will submit an assessment of the legislation as written testimony for the hearing scheduled on September 27, 2006.

You and your staff have been with the Owyhee Initiative Work Group every step of the way. Your encouragement strengthened our resolve at critical junctures in our effort, and your leadership now is critical to our success. Thank you for your unwavering faith in our shared endeavor.

Sincerely,