

# If Crapo opposes land transfers, why not say so?

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

U.S. Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, was on a string of small town visits when Darrin Nord of Rigby spoke up.

As the Post Register's Bryan Clark reported, Nord pushed for a transfer of federal lands to state and local governments.

"Why not take the resources and give them the finger?" Nord said. "I mean, that's a fight. A fight's a fight."

What did Crapo say?

Did he point out - as he did in April - that he does not favor federal land transfers? Back then, Crapo insisted environmentalists had mischaracterized his vote in favor of Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski's budget resolution amendment when they said it paved the way toward such transfers.

Or did Crapo explain the state had no legal claim to the federal forests and range lands? After spending more than \$90,000 on its own lawyer, the Legislature's public lands task force reached that conclusion - although Attorney General Lawrence Wasden's office had offered the same advice for free.

How about the economic analyses that same task force either stimulated or pursued itself? Only under the most ideal conditions - the state could

cherry-pick what federal lands it wanted, it could ramp up logging operations to historic levels and that it would always get top dollar for the trees - would Idaho make some money.

More likely, it would go broke trying to manage those lands, especially if it had to pay firefighting costs. Ultimately, the state would have no choice but to sell off those lands to the highest bidder.

Did Crapo mention that?

And when Nord spoke up, did Crapo say the majority of Idahoans disagree with him? Most of them are satisfied with the job the feds are doing. They fear state ownership would lead to a massive liquidation of those assets and the end of their access to those lands.

Did Idaho's senior senator tell his Rigby constituent that this summer's round of northern Idaho forest fires occurred largely on state-owned lands or those private holdings protected by the Idaho Department of Lands? So far, the bills have come to \$60 million.

So much for the theory that state-managed forests - with more aggressive logging and road-building - do not burn.

"Our problems are the conditions creating this and the way we spend money to fight it - not who's managing it," Boise State University political scientist and public lands expert John Freemuth told the Spokesman-Review's Betsy Russell. "I think we've finally learned that's simply a false hypothesis."

And where was the Idaho Republican who has championed the idea of bringing together all sides in Idaho's natural resource disputes - conservationists, local officials, industry, the public and land managers - into a collaborative process? That's how Crapo helped create the Owyhee Canyonlands wilderness package. Likewise, Crapo's Clearwater Basin Collaborative has opened up areas for new logging and jobs while protecting other lands and streams.

Not in Rigby.

At least not that day.

Instead, Clark noted Crapo nodded as Nord talked about seizing federal land.

"I agree," Crapo said.

He agrees?

Is this - as Clark's profile suggests - just another example of the incumbent veering so far to the right that he can ward off any possible GOP primary challenge next year? Examples of that include everything from his voting record to his chumminess with figures such as talk radio host "Tea Party Bob" Neugebauer.

It's possible Crapo intends to revert to the pragmatism that's marked his 30 years in public life after next spring's primary campaign is over. Perhaps even conservationists he's been alienating will look past his recent maneuvers.

Providing people such as Nord will allow him. - M.T.