Mr. Chairman, I am appearing on behalf of The Wilderness Society. Though I am not now affiliated with The Society, I have accepted the Chairmanship of The Society effective in mid-January. Accompanying me today is Charles Clusen, The Wilderness Society's Conservation Director.

The Wilderness Society is a non-profit conservation group founded in 1935 and dedicated to the objective of proper management of the public lands and the preservation of wild areas.

Let me state our position at the outset: We are strongly opposed to this nomination and we are gravely concerned for the future of America's wilderness and environmental integrity if Mr. Watt is confirmed.
We do not question Mr. Watt's ability, commitment or dedication to the causes which have been the objective of his advocacy. We are satisfied he believes in what he says and does and that he would faithfully pursue the same objectives in his public responsibility as he has in his private responsibility.

Though no one would quarrel with his right to his private views, we do vigorously object to the translation of these narrow private interest views into the decision making process of the Interior Department. No doubt Mr. Watt would argue that the positions he has taken are, in fact, in the public interest. That is the crux of our difference with Mr. Watt.

The Secretary of Interior is the chief conservation officer of the United States. It is his role to be the educator, the philosopher, the vigorous advocate of sound resource management and the caring custodian of wilderness areas, fisheries, wildlife habitat, public lands, parks, wetlands, endangered species. Advocates for uncontrolled private exploitation of public resources are legion. Thus it is the Secretary of Interior who must be the public advocate for a conservation ethic.

The jurisdiction of the Interior Department is vast and the decisions made there are consequential to us all, with ramifications that cannot be predicted or measured with any degree of certainty. The Department oversees roughly 300 million acres
174 million acres are in the Lower 48 states and 24 million of these are designated for wilderness study; there are 77 million acres in the national park system managed as National Parks, National Recreation Areas and Historic Sites; it has jurisdiction over the Fish and Wildlife Service, enforces the Endangered Species Act, enforces the law on strip mining, controls offshore oil leasing, controls subsurface mining on federal lands, including Forest Service lands and directs the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The Committee is quite aware of these facts. We recite them only for the purpose of calling public attention to the enormous importance and dimension of Interior jurisdiction.

The selection of a vigorous, committed resource-environmental oriented Secretary is crucial because the issue is overriding in importance and the time is short. In the long pull no other issue facing the human species on the planet is as important as the status of his resources and the quality of his environment. This is so because they determine and limit the standard of living and the physical quality of life on the planet.

Thus, how well we manage and protect our air, water, soil, forests, minerals, wilderness and scenic beauty is of vital concern to everyone.
FROM OUR REVIEW OF MR. WATT'S INVOLVEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES WE THINK IT IS CLEAR HE DOES NOT SHARE THE SAME SENSE OF URGENCY, CONCERN OR UNDERSTANDING OF THESE ISSUES AS EXPRESSED BY THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY THROUGH SUCCEEDING CONGRESSES AND PRESIDENTS OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES.

MR. WATT IS PRESIDENT AND CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER OF A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION CALLED THE MOUNTAIN STATES LEGAL FOUNDATION, ESTABLISHED IN 1977. ACCORDING TO ONE OF ITS PUBLICATIONS CALLED THE LITIGATOR, (SUMMER 1980) THE ORGANIZATION WAS "FOUNDED BY A GROUP OF CONCERNED BUSINESSMEN TO COMBAT THE PRESENCE (AND SUCCESS) OF 'SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS'--SUCH AS ENVIRONMENTALISTS, NO-GROWTH ADVOCATES AND THOSE WHO SEEK MORE GOVERNMENT CONTROL."

THE FACT THAT IT RefERS DEROGATORILY TO ENVIRONMENTALISTS AS A "SPECIAL INTEREST" GROUP IDENTIFIES ITS BIAS QUITE CLEARLY ENOUGH FOR ANYONE TO UNDERSTAND. WHAT, ONE MAY ASK, WAS THE "SPECIAL INTEREST" OF THOSE MILLIONS OF AMERICANS WHO PEACEFULLY DEMONSTRATED ON THE STREETS FROM COAST TO COAST ON EARTH DAY? WHO IS THE "SPECIAL INTEREST" GROUP? THOSE WHO WANT TO PRESERVE A QUALITY ENVIRONMENT FOR EVERYONE OR THOSE WHO WANT TO EXPLOIT OUR RESOURCES FOR PROFIT WITHOUT ANY CONTROLS OR STANDARDS WHATSOEVER?

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MOUNTAIN STATES LEGAL FOUNDATION IS DOMINATED BY THOSE INTERESTS WHICH HAVE BEEN
CONSISTENT AND PERSISTENT IN THEIR ATTACKS ON ALMOST EVERY ASPECT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT INCLUDING OPPOSITION TO CLEAN AIR AND WATER STANDARDS, STRIP MINING CONTROLS, PROTECTION OF WILDERNESS, GRAZING CONTROLS ON PUBLIC LANDS, LIMITATIONS ON MINING EXPLORATION OR CONTROLS OVER THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC FOREST LANDS.

MR. WATT HAS MADE IT CLEAR BY HIS ACTION AND WORDS AS WELL AS BY HIS OFFICIAL ASSOCIATION WITH THE MOUNTAIN STATES LEGAL FOUNDATION AS PRESIDENT AND CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER THAT HE SHARES THE VIEWPOINT OF HIS BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND ENDORSES THE OBJECTIVES OF THE FOUNDATION.

OF THE 25 MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF MR. WATT’S FOUNDATION, ONE THIRD ARE FROM MINING AND OIL INTERESTS AND MOST OF THE REST REPRESENT BANKING, RANCHING, TIMBER, POWER OR DEVELOPMENT COMPANIES, INCLUDING ONE BREWERY REPRESENTED BY JOSEPH COORS, OF THE ADOLPH COORS COMPANY.

THESE ARE ALL REPUTABLE BUSINESS CONCERNS, SOME WITH NATIONAL REPUTATIONS SUCH AS THE BOISE CASCADE CORPORATION, THE IDAHO POWER COMPANY AND KENNECOTT COPPER COMPANY.

NO ONE IS CONCERNED ABOUT MR. WATT’S PURSUIT OF HIS PRIVATE OBJECTIVES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR BUT WE ARE CONCERNED, INDEED ALARMED, BY THE PROSPECT OF A SECRETARY WHO BRINGS TO HIS OFFICE WHAT WE BELIEVE TO BE A STRONG ANTI-ENVIRONMENTAL BIAS AND WHO IS STRONGLY SUPPORTED AND CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH THOSE
INTERESTS WHICH HAVE BEEN IN THE FOREFRONT OF THE FIGHT AGAINST ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS.

On December 23, 1980 The Washington Post commented on this point, making it clear it shared with us precisely the same reservations about Mr. Watt. The editorial stated, in part --

"The President-elect has said that he is looking for someone to balance 'environmental extremists,' but in naming James G. Watt he appears to have gone to an opposite extreme and chosen someone who has demonstrated little understanding of the Interior Secretary's role as trustee, on behalf of the public, of the bulk of the nation's natural resources. In remarks at yesterday's press conference Mr. Watt professed to be keenly concerned with balancing the claims on the department in a judicious way. But his background proclaims him to be an undiscriminating advocate of private development interests and a man with an overriding bias in favor of immediate exploitation of resources rather than long-range management. Sound policy grows in part from the tension between competing views. In any administration, regardless of its philosophical bent, Interior should be speaking on behalf of concerns different from, for example, those of the departments of Energy, Commerce and Agriculture. Judging from the available record, it does not seem likely that it will do so under Mr. Watt's guidance."

A word should be said about the semantics of the anti-environmental movement. Certain code words are used indiscriminately to describe any individual or group of individuals who advocate higher air and water quality standards or any resource
MANAGEMENT APPROACH THEY HAPPEN TO OPPOSE.

Mr. Watt freely uses these code words to describe anyone who does not agree with his position. They are scare words and they are meaningless but they help him confuse the issue and degrade the quality of public dialogue.

Those who are targets of this attack are called "No Growth Advocates" who would collapse the country by depriving it of adequate energy and leaving millions unemployed. This charge is calculated to stir up the editorial writers and induce the public, industry and labor to oppose wise resource management proposals which will, in fact, serve our country best.

The word "extremist" is regularly used to describe any position different from his own or any environmental standard he opposes.

Frequently the phrase "environmental extremist" is used or the word "environmentalist" is used as a synonym for "extremist." Mr. Watt, publications of the Mountain States Legal Foundation and their supporters use these phrases as part of their normal dialogue on environmental issues.

Those of us who have been involved in these issues for many years are familiar with the code words, we understand them, we know their political and propaganda objectives and
WE HAVE BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO THEIR INDISCRIMINATE USE.

However, we do not expect, indeed we are discouraged, that anyone nominated to be the chief environmental officer for the United States would attack the environmental movement with the same techniques and same code words used by our most uncompromising critics.

The problem we face is not "environmental extremism" if, indeed, anyone can explain what that is.

The real question we must ask is whether we have the foresight, the determination, the understanding, the political courage to make those major decisions that might, just might, significantly slow down the wasteful dissipation of our resources and arrest the deterioration of our air and water before the productivity of the oceans and rivers is destroyed.

It is a monumental task. In most respects we are losing ground both here and all over the planet.

We cannot afford to gamble on the remote hope that Mr. Watt might significantly modify his views. They are firmly set and ideologically grounded. Nor is there any reason to believe he might in the future show greater insight and perspective about the vastness of these views. America and the American earth deserve better.