



The Jim McClure watch has begun. Although the coalition of Idahoans seeking to have Craters of the Moon National Monument changed to a national park appears to be inching closer to its objective, observers say the state's senior senator could stall the group's efforts.

And those advocating the necessary legislation for Craters' national park designation are doing so with a certain amount of exigence.

That's because they hope to have the area become the nation's 51st, and Idaho's first, national park next year to commemorate the state's Centennial. Although Craters of the Moon is already under the management of the National Park Service and steps to make the area a national park in 1990 would be relatively easy, supporters contend the legislative process must begin soon.

Craters of the Moon Development Inc., the primary organization behind the move to make the area a national park, has its champion in U.S. Rep. Richard Stallings, who is scheduled to introduce legislation as early as August. Sen. Steve Symms and Rep. Larry Craig are expected to support the measure. It's a different story, however, with McClure.

"Watch McClure," advises Boise State political scientist and parks expert John Freemuth when asked what it will take to have Craters of the Moon become a national park by 1990. "He's the key card in the deck. . . . If he questions park designation and is able to mobilize support for his point of view, then maybe it won't happen in 1990. But if he says, 'I've thought about it and they [park designa-

Park on Hold

*McClure pivotal
to Craters park
designation*

By Bob Evancho

tion supporters] have addressed my concerns and I think it's a good idea,' then you might see it in 1990."

Thus far McClure has taken a wait-and-see attitude. According to Pat Sullivan, an executive assistant in McClure's Boise office, the senator wants to consider two points. First, does Craters of the Moon meet the exacting standards required of America's national parks? And second, will park designation affect hunting and grazing in the area?

"Yes, there are resource values on that land," Sullivan comments, "but we're looking to see . . . whether those resource values meet what the Park Service considers national park material. We also want to ask if a national park would inhibit [livestock] trailing that goes through that area."

To find those answers, McClure's office

has funded a study by the National Park Service "to find out exactly what limitations will be placed on the land should it become a national park," Sullivan says.

Freemuth points to an earlier preliminary study by the National Park Service that says certain features of Craters of the Moon area are suitable as an addition to the national park system. "But it was their conclusion that it lacked the diversity of features generally associated with a national park and that it should remain as an expanded national monument," he says. "This study, however, was only a preliminary and superficial analysis."

Such obstacles have not deterred those who believe a national park would enhance Idaho's reputation and showcase the Snake River Plain's unique landscape. And support seems to be growing. According to Rupert businessman Glen Allen, Craters of the Moon Development Inc. chairman, the concept is supported by "virtually all communities and counties in southern Idaho, from Preston to Boise, as well as many business, agriculture and government leaders. It's not just one group."

Like most of those pushing for a park, Allen is hoping and waiting for McClure's endorsement. "I think we can get it done [by 1990] if he jumps on our bandwagon," Allen says.

A careful approach to the Craters of the Moon debate, Sullivan says, is the proper approach. "Jim McClure is not opposing it," Sullivan says, "but at the same time he wants to be absolutely sure as to what it entails. I know some people get frustrated with us, but I have told them that [the senator] wants to go through the right process, to determine the viability of the idea and to check his concerns." □