

Testimony of

The Honorable Orrin Hatch

November 6, 2001

It is a pleasure to be here this afternoon with someone as well-qualified for his position as Tom Sansonetti. I congratulate you on being selected by President Bush to serve as the Assistant Attorney General for the Environment and Natural Resources Division. Having reviewed your distinguished record, I have no doubt that you will do great service to the citizens of this country upon confirmation.

The Division you have been nominated to lead is essentially the nation's environmental law firm. The ENRD, as it is known, is responsible for litigation concerning the protection, use and development of the nation's natural resources and public lands. It also handles law suits involving wildlife protection, Indian rights and claims, the cleanup of the nation's hazardous waste sites, and the acquisition of federal property for federal use. And it defends environmental challenges to government programs and activities.

The person who oversees this important Division and its approximately 700 employees must be someone with experience. Fortunately, Tom Sansonetti has a proven track record. As the Solicitor of the Department of Interior from 1990 to 1993, he acted as the primary legal advisor to Secretary Manuel Lujan, Jr., managed a \$32 million administrative budget, and oversaw the 900-case legal docket. He served as one of the six federal negotiators for the Exxon Valdez oil spill settlement, and he was appointed Counsel to the Endangered Species Committee for the Spotted Owl hearings in Oregon. Previous to that, he served two years as the Interior Department's Associate Solicitor for Energy and Resources. Equally important, Mr. Sansonetti has also gained familiarity representing private-sector clients as a lawyer specializing in environment and natural resources law, including cases regarding endangered species, water law, mining regulations and Superfund sites. In short, he is a well-rounded and highly competent lawyer with a reputation for fairness. He is exactly the person we need to lead the Environment and Natural Resources Division.

Again, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to the Committee. I look forward to this hearing, and to working with Senator Cantwell, Chairman Leahy and others to make sure the Committee and the full Senate hold timely votes on your nomination.