

March 22, 2013

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
House Subcommittee on Public Lands and
Environmental Regulation
123 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20215

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Public Lands and
Environmental Regulation
1511 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20215

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva:

The undersigned organizations strongly support Rep. Paul Gosar's (R-Ariz.) *Catastrophic Wildfire Prevention Act of 2013*, introduced today by a bipartisan group of representatives. The mismanagement of our federally-owned forests has created great economic hardship and danger for our members, and threatens to do much worse in the coming years. Our industry and rural economies in the West will spend decades attempting to recover from the millions of dollars' worth of infrastructure damage and forage loss that have been the result of catastrophic wildfire in recent years. Meanwhile, the *Catastrophic Wildfire Prevention Act of 2013* offers a commonsense solution that is not only good for the resources, but will benefit family businesses and rural communities throughout the west.

The bill will allow the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to streamline projects to reduce hazardous fuel loads, thus reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire and protecting endangered species on lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Authorized projects include timber thinning and livestock grazing. This will benefit the rural communities that need protection from wildfire and that count on the grazing and timber industries as their lifeblood. Endangered species will benefit as well, as the bill calls for the inclusion of catastrophic fire risk assessments in recovery plans and critical habitat designations, and allows for hazardous fuels-reduction projects to go forth under existing emergency provisions of the Endangered Species Act.

The Catastrophic Wildfire Prevention Act will also extend the successful stewardship contracting program used by the USFS to work with public and private entities on forest restoration projects. Additionally, the bill expands the good neighbor program for the USFS and BLM to enter into cooperative agreements with state foresters.

This legislation will also save American taxpayer dollars. The federal government spends more than \$1 billion each year fighting fire. This does not account for any restoration activities, or the dollars spent by state and local governments. Implementing the preventative measures proposed in this legislation will relieve those annual expenses. It will also help put a stop to the crippling cycle of overregulation and litigation that has led to the current dire situation on public lands.

Again, we thank you for your attention to this important matter, and for supporting our members as they continue working to provide the base for strong communities and sound management of our nation's forests.

Sincerely,

Public Lands Council
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Sheep Industry Association
Association of National Grasslands
National Association of Conservation Districts

CC: Members of the Subcommittee

Arizona Cattle Growers Association
Arizona Natural Resource Conservation Districts State Association
Arizona Wool Growers' Association
California Cattlemen's Association
California Wool Growers Association
Colorado Cattlemen's Association
Idaho Cattle Association
Idaho Wool Growers Association
Montana Stockgrowers Association
Montana Public Lands Council
Montana Association of State Grazing Districts
Montana Wool Growers Association
Nevada Cattlemen's Association
New Mexico Stock Growers' Association
New Mexico Wool Growers, Inc.
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
South Dakota Cattlemen's Association
Texas Cattle Feeders Association
Utah Cattlemen's Association
Utah Wool Growers Association
Washington Cattlemen's Association
Wyoming Stock Growers Association