



WYOMING STOCK GROWERS ASSOCIATION

Guardian of Wyoming's Cow Country since 1872

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October 23, 2017

Senator John Barrasso
Chairman
Committee on Environment & Public Works
United States Senate

Dear Chairman Barrasso:

RE: Wildfire Prevention & Mitigation Act of 2017

The Wyoming Stock Growers Association (WSGA) has represented the ranching industry of Wyoming for over 145 years. The vast majority of our members hold grazing permits or leases on National Forests and/or BLM managed public lands. The ability to graze these lands is essential to maintaining the viability of their ranching operations.

Grazing on forested lands precedes establishment of the National Forest System and remains one of the most wide-spread multiple uses of these lands today. However, the reliability of grazing on National Forests has continually diminished due to failure to properly manage our forest resources and the inability to have timely dependable decisions on grazing-related matters. WSGA believes that your proposed legislation takes major steps to address both of these factors.

Appropriately and timely vegetative management is critical to maintaining healthy resilient forests. Vegetative management includes both the timber resource and the forage resource. Today our national forest managers have the skills and access to the scientific knowledge needed to maintain resilient forests. Through partnerships with the forest products industry and the ranching industry they have the tools necessary to achieve proper management.

Unfortunately, today the vast majority of timber removal contracts and grazing permit renewals are met with litigation. These decisions are challenged even though they are well within the parameters of resource management plans that have been developed with full public input. Title I of this Act would provide significant relief from litigation that directly contributes to the degradation of our forest resources and the proliferation of wildfires.

When wildfires sweep through forests, affected livestock grazing allotments are lost for several seasons. Infrastructure, including fences and water developments, is destroyed and often must be rebuilt at the expense of the permittee. Resulting fallen timber can make it difficult for livestock to move through the allotment even after forage has regrown.

"Shaping and Living The Code of The West"

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Title III of the Act provides essential relief from the “analysis paralysis” that routinely plagues decision-making on forest projects. In Subtitle A this is accomplished by providing for the use of Environmental Assessments in lieu of full Environmental Impact Statements, limiting alternatives to the proposed action and a no action alternative, limiting the size of these documents and providing a firm time frame for their completion. These are all important steps in restoring “common sense” to the decision-making process.

WSGA is particularly pleased with the broad definition given to “ecosystem restoration” in Subtitle B of Title III. Grazing permittees are beneficiaries of many of the restoration activities identified in this Subtitle. In addition, livestock grazing can be a valuable contributor to many of these restoration activities.

Subtitle C Categorical Exclusions will provide a clear incentive to the Forest Service to act in a timely manner to restore resources damaged by a broad array of natural events. Currently, the delay in taking actions to remediate these impacts is often delayed for years pending completion of environmental documents.

Implementation of many of the provisions of this Act will be dependent on development of partnerships between the Forest Service and private sector enterprises including timber and grazing. WSGA is committed to working with the Forest Service to foster these relationships.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide our input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Magagna". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jim Magagna
Executive Vice President

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