

THREATS, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING BY FEDERAL LAND MANAGING AGENCIES, PART II

OVERSIGHT HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS
AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THREATS, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING BY FEDERAL LAND MANAGING AGENCIES, PART II

Thursday, July 24, 2014
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:05 p.m., in room 1324, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Doug LaMalfa presiding.

Present: Representatives McClintock, Lummis, Tipton, LaMalfa; Grijalva, and Garcia.

Also Present: Representatives Pearce and Stewart.

Mr. LAMALFA. The subcommittee will come to order. The Chairman notes the presence of a quorum.

Under Committee Rule 4(f), opening statements are limited to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee so that we can quickly hear from our witnesses in time today. However, I ask unanimous consent to include any other Members' opening statements in the hearing record if submitted to the Clerk by close of business today. Hearing no objection, so ordered.

I will also ask unanimous consent that Members not on the subcommittee or the full committee be allowed to sit at the dais and take part in the proceedings. Without objection, so ordered.

STATEMENT OF HON. DOUGLAS LAMALFA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. LAMALFA. Today we have Part II in our oversight series on, "Threats, Intimidation, and Bullying by Federal Land Management Agencies." During Part I of the hearing, the committee heard firsthand accounts of mistreatment by the hands of Federal officials seeking to extort the witnesses into relinquishing their property rights. In the case of one of the witnesses, the Supreme Court, in *Wilkie v. Robbins*, said Congress has not provided victims of Federal bullying a legal recourse to seek a remedy for damages.

In Part II of this hearing, we will hear other accounts of mistreatment of American citizens who have been subjected to abusive behaviors by Federal officials. These firsthand accounts, like those examined in Part I, will give the victims of abusive conduct by a Federal land managing official a chance to tell their story to Congress.

Their testimony will show that status quo agency oversight policies and procedures are inadequate for addressing or deterring employee abuses, and may instead embolden overreaching or malicious employee behavior, with little risk of retribution for their actions.

In many cases, citizens who refuse to surrender their constitutional rights have been subject to a pattern and practice of threats and intimidation. Government agencies, through individual and collective efforts, are actively using land designations and restrictions, prompted mainly by radical environmental groups, to curtail multiple use on Federal lands.

State and local governments have been subjected to threats, lack of cooperation, and numerous unfair or heavy-handed tactics, which threaten public safety and threaten the livelihoods of communities, especially those in public land states. These actions are creating unnecessary tension with individual citizens, state and local units of government, and even local law enforcement.

Congressional oversight and legislative solutions are necessary to provide an effective check on Federal officials who abuse their regulatory powers. Today's hearing will continue the committee's work to fashion a legislative solution that will give targets of abuse by Federal land management employees the opportunity to seek a just remedy.

I am eager to hear the panel of witnesses today, and I hope Members on both sides of the aisle will listen to their accounts of what happened to them so we can work together in fashioning our remedy to these abuses.

I would like now to turn it over to our Ranking Member, Mr. Grijalva, for his opening statement.

STATEMENT OF HON. RAÚL GRIJALVA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also want to thank Chairman Bishop for holding this hearing today. As was stated, this is our second hearing on intimidation and bullying by Federal land management agencies. But I do not think anyone in this room wants to simply point fingers or make an unfounded accusation. The issue should be improving relationships, and that improvement is a two-way street that requires dialog and partnership, not name-calling and disengagement.

Unfortunately, like the first hearing on this subject, the administration was not invited to testify. We will not be able to hear their perspective or have them respond directly to the witnesses in order to find solutions and common ground. Their presence would have made this a much more useful hearing and better use of this committee's time.

Instead, this afternoon will be an echo chamber of complaints and hand-wringing. We will hear testimony on the range of issues, from the Endangered Species Act to accusations that the BLM is turning southern Utah into a police state.

However, I would also like to say that all Federal employees, regardless of rank and position, should have and should uphold a high standard of professionalism to provide the best possible service to the public, and I think we could all agree that the vast majority act in a professional and courteous manner. Unfortunately, like any company, organization, or government, there will be instances where employees do not live up to that standard, and they must be held accountable.

Today's hearing will be an opportunity to hear from individuals who have grievances with the Federal land managers and law enforcement personnel. As we hear from today's witnesses, I think it is important to remember that these incidents should not be seen as a reflection of all the public land management agencies and their employees.

Today's witnesses will describe disputes they have had with BLM and the Forest Service over grazing permits, water rights, and law enforcement, among other issues. Keep in mind, BLM administers 18,000 grazing permits and less 155 million acres, and the Forest Service administers nearly 8,000 grazing permits on roughly 90 million acres, the vast majority of which are managed without complaints or incidents.

It is the responsibility of the Federal land managing agencies and their employees to protect the land that is the property of the entire American people. With such a broad directive, the opinions on how to do so are endless.

In some of these cases, disagreement in policy is perceived as overreach of authority, and the land managers who, under law, carry out the policies are considered threatening and bullying. It is important to see these examples for what they are, a matter of difference in policy opinion, and we must not lose sight of that.

Mr. Chairman, thank you, and with that I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LAMALFA. Thank you, Mr. Grijalva.

We will now hear from our panel of witnesses, but at this time I would like to yield to the gentleman from Utah, Mr. Stewart, who would like to make some introductions of them.

Mr. STEWART. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to sit before your committee for at least part of a day. I am on the Appropriations Committee now, but I am on the Interior Subcommittee, and these issues are very, very dear to me. And I think they are really important, and this hearing is very important. So thank you for that.

I would like to introduce two of your panelists today, who happen to be not only from the State of Utah but from my District, and in addition to introducing them, maybe make a brief comment on the topic of the hearing.

First, I am pleased to introduce Sheriff James D. Perkins, or as his friends call him, Danny. Sheriff Perkins has been in service to Garfield County for a total of 27 years in law enforcement. He was a deputy for more than 20 years, and was then chosen to serve as the Sheriff of Garfield County in January of 2007, and he has continued to serve Garfield County as sheriff ever since.

Sheriff Perkins is actively involved in the drug task force, and strives to keep drugs out of Garfield County. And Danny is devoted to the people of the community, there is no question about that.

I would also like to introduce a good friend, Commissioner Leland Pollock, who has been a Commissioner of Garfield County for the last 3 years. He and I have known each other for about that amount of time, and I have not met anyone in my role in Congress who has impressed me more.

It has been my pleasure to work with him closely on a number of different issues since coming to Congress, and he is a genuine

public servant who puts first the specific needs of his constituents in what are really some of the most rural parts of our Nation.

He understands the impacts of Federal ownership on land and how that can affect real people in his community, and he is committed to finding solutions to improve the lives of the people in Garfield County as those who come to visit this very, very beautiful part of the state.

Then, Mr. Chairman, if I could divert just briefly and talk a little bit about the subject at hand that the committee has chosen to hold this hearing. I feel like it is a timely and very important topic.

If you would refer to the slides, and I show you these slides, at first glance you might look at those and think, well, that is some scene from some war zone, maybe Afghanistan or Iraq or something similar to that. But actually, that is not true. Those are Interior Department agency employees, and those pictures were actually taken in the western United States within the last 6 months or so.

I have been disturbed over the past several months as I have learned more and more about the level of militarization occurring within many Federal agencies, and I mean almost every Federal agency, but also, unfortunately, including Department of the Interior agencies.

When I see agents with helmets, with shields, with hard-plated body armor, with grenades, and in some cases grenade launchers and M4 carbines, my assumption is that they are military or possibly with the Department of Justice. As it turns out, the National Park Service has a number of what they call special event tactical teams, and they look an awful lot like what we would consider SWAT teams. There are also BLM officers with a surprising amount of firepower.

I recognize that officers need to be able to protect themselves, and in some cases they are in very rural and lonely parts of the state or of the Nation, and they need to be able to protect themselves in situations that may be unpredictable. And I want them to be able to protect themselves.

But what concerns me is when you see these type of very heavy-handed SWAT-like teams, with non-DOJ agencies being used as the tip of the spear for Federal law enforcement. I am not sure that having these teams scattered across dozens of Federal agencies is the most efficient use of resources. I think it is heavy-handed, it is intimidating to the American people, and I think it harms the sense of trust that is so important to be established between American citizens and the Federal Government.

I have introduced a bill to address some of these concerns. If the Interior agencies have SWAT teams or SET teams or whatever they might be called, we ought to know of their existence and have a better justification from the agencies for why they are necessary and when and how they are used. And I am hopeful that this committee hearing will help cast some light on that.

With that, I thank our witnesses for being with us today. And Mr. Chairman, I yield back my time.

Mr. LAMALFA. Thank you to the gentleman from Utah.

Also, I would like to introduce the third member of this panel today. Please take the dais as your name is called. It is Mr. Grant

Gerber, a Commissioner from Elko County, Nevada. So welcome, sir. Thank you for joining the panel.

I would also like to pause here for a moment before we start with testimony. Our colleague, the gentleman from New Mexico, Mr. Pearce, would like to acknowledge and make introductions of the second panel. You will remain where you are until the first panel is finished, but Mr. Pearce is on a limited time frame.

So I would ask unanimous consent for the committee to do so. Mr. Pearce.

STATEMENT OF HON. STEVE PEARCE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

Mr. PEARCE. Thank you, Chairman LaMalfa and Ranking Member Grijalva, members of the subcommittee. I appreciate your holding this hearing today on Federal agencies which intimidate and bully private citizens. I asked the Natural Resources Committee in May of this year to conduct a hearing on this topic as it relates to Otero County, New Mexico, which is in my District.

I appreciate the subcommittee looking into the issues as well as inviting the people on the ground who deal with the Forest Service every day. I am proud to call Otero County Commissioner Ronny Rardin a personal friend.

I would also like to thank Jose Varela Lopez of the New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association, Attorney Blair Dunn, and Mike Lucero, all for making the journey all the way from the Land of Enchantment to the Nation's capital for today's hearing. Our National Forests are real treasures to the people of New Mexico. We in southern New Mexico know conservation better than any outside special interest group or bureaucrats in Washington.

However, in recent years we have seen a sharp downturn for the worse from Federal land management agencies. Balance is no longer the order of the day, but instead, agencies look to implement a narrow special interest-led agenda. BLM is slow-walking oil and gas drilling applications. The Forest Service only puts up minimal acreage for necessary thinning projects. Grazing is improperly stopped because of faulty science. Public access to public lands and resources is being cut off.

The situation in Otero County began this spring, when the U.S. Forest Service began construction of a pipe fence that directly impacted the water rights of ranchers in the Agua Chiquita riparian area of the Lincoln National Forest. This was done to maintain the habitat of the meadow jumping mouse before the mouse was even listed as endangered.

The Service claimed that the construction of this fence would not impact the ranch owners who own the water because their cattle can move through two small fence openings. Imagine trying to herd a large number of cattle through a 10-foot-wide opening in a fence. Bureaucrats and special interest groups treat that as a solution. I believe it is a shell game.

Had the Forest Service actually consulted with the Office of the State Engineer, the agency which oversees water rights in New Mexico, the Forest Service would have learned what my office learned within 24 hours of contacting the State Engineer: the Goss family has adjudicated water rights in the Agua Chiquita dating

back to the 1880s. The fact that an agency would make the claim that water rights do not exist when they clearly do is an example of the Federal Government's arrogance and attempt to bully our local ranchers into submission.

The Forest Service also claims to accommodate ranchers by saying that the trenches near the Agua Chiquita allow water to flow under the fences. New Mexico, like much of the West, has been in a drought since 2011, and water does not flow through these trenches unless a heavy downpour occurs.

The New Mexico State Supreme Court has ruled that an individual with water rights has the ability to move the water to the cattle through trenches or pipelines, yet the Forest Service refuses to allow the pipeline.

The Court of Federal Claims sided with the Goss family in a similar case 4 years ago. The actions of the Forest Service have made it nearly impossible to move the water to the cattle, violating the law and violating the findings of two different courts.

Despite the bullying by the Federal Government, the county attempted to mediate this dispute with the U.S. Attorney's Office. When my office asked to attend this meeting for our constituents, the U.S. Attorney and the Forest Service threatened to cancel it, leaving one to wonder why an elected official is being excluded.

At this meeting, the Forest Service and U.S. Attorney refused to compromise. They would not even agree to not lock the gates on the fence until the issue could be discussed more thoroughly and resolved.

I am afraid that this is only the opening salvo from Federal agencies attempting to further restrict access to water and other vital resources in the West. The Environmental Protection Agency is attempting to regulate virtually every ditch in the United States under the Clean Water Act.

The Forest Service believes it has a right to regulate ground water it does not own, including ground water underneath lands it does not own, as well as the power to review state water rights applications. The arrogance and the bullying by Federal agencies must stop. This is not some theoretical argument. It is about our culture in the West and our livelihood. It is about the economy of southern New Mexico and other western states.

Chairman LaMalfa, Ranking Member Grijalva, and members of the subcommittee, I would like to once again thank you for allowing me to speak here on this issue today. I look forward to reading the testimony, and I have a more complete statement that I would like to submit for the record, with unanimous consent.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pearce follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. STEVE PEARCE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS
FROM THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, members of the subcommittee: thank you for conducting this hearing today on Federal agencies' intimidation and bullying tactics of private citizens. I asked the Natural Resources Committee in May to conduct a hearing on this topic as it relates to Otero County, New Mexico. I appreciate the subcommittee looking into these issues, as well as inviting the people on the ground who deal with the Forest Service every day. I am proud to call Otero County Commissioner Ronnie Rardin a personal friend. I'd also like to thank Jose Varela Lopez of the New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association, Attorney Blair Dunn

and Rancher Mike Lucero for making the journey all the way from the Land of Enchantment to our Nation's capital for today's hearing.

Our National Forests are a real treasure to the people of New Mexico. We in southern New Mexico know conservation better than any outside special interest group or bureaucrats in Washington. Sportsmen require access to public lands to hunt and fish. Tourists need the ability to move their vehicles along roads, and recreational enthusiasts must be able to bring boats and OHVs to truly enjoy everything that our forests have to offer. And our ranchers, often surrounded by Federal lands and checkerboarding, require rights of way and grazing permits that they pay for. Allowing such varied forms of access helps to achieve the necessary balance that protects our lands and economic interests.

However, in recent years, we've seen a sharp turn for the worse from Federal land management agencies. Balance is not the order of the day, but instead agencies look to implement a narrow special interest-led agenda. BLM is slow-walking oil and gas drilling applications. The Forest Service only puts up minimal acreage for necessary thinning projects. Grazing is abruptly stopped because of faulty science. Public access to public lands and resources is being cut off.

The situation in Otero County began this spring when the U.S. Forest Service began construction of a pipe fence that directly impacted the water rights of ranchers in the Agua Chiquita riparian area of the Lincoln National Forest. This was done to maintain the habitat of the meadow jumping mouse—before the mouse was even listed as endangered. The Service claims that the construction of this fence would not impact ranchers who own the water because their cattle can move through two small fence openings. Imagine trying to herd a large number of cattle through a 10 foot-wide opening in a fence. Bureaucrats and interest groups treat that as a solution—I believe it's a shell game.

Had the Forest Service actually consulted the Office of the State Engineer, the agency which oversees water rights in New Mexico, the Forest Service would have learned what my office learned within 24 hours of contacting the State Engineer: the Goss family has adjudicated water rights in the Agua Chiquita dating back to the 1880s. The fact that an agency would make the claim that water rights do not exist when they clearly do is an example of the Federal Government's arrogance and an attempt to bully our local ranchers into submission.

The Forest Service also claims to accommodate ranchers by saying that trenches near the Agua Chiquita allow water to flow under the fences. New Mexico has been in a drought since 2011, and water does not flow through these trenches unless a heavy downpour occurs. The New Mexico State Supreme Court has ruled that an individual with water rights has the ability to move the water to their cattle. The Court of Federal Claims sided with the Goss ranch in a similar case 4 years ago. The actions of the Forest Service have made it nearly impossible to move the water to the cattle, violating state law.

Despite the bullying by the Federal Government, the county attempted to mediate this dispute with the U.S. Attorney's Office. When my office asked to attend this meeting, the U.S. Attorney and Forest Service threatened to cancel it, leaving one to wonder why an elected official is being excluded. At this meeting, the Forest Service and U.S. Attorney refused to compromise. They would not even agree to not lock the gates on the fence until this issue could be discussed more thoroughly, and resolved.

I am afraid that this is only the opening salvo from Federal agencies attempting to further restrict access to water and other vital resources in the West. The Environmental Protection Agency is attempting to regulate virtually every ditch in the United States under the Clean Water Act. The Forest Service believes it has the right to regulate groundwater it does not own, including groundwater underneath lands it does not own, as well as the power to review state water rights applications. The arrogance and bullying by Federal agencies must stop.

This is not some theoretical argument. This is about our culture and livelihood. This is about the economy of southern New Mexico and the West as a whole.

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva and members of the subcommittee, I would like to once again thank you for holding this hearing today. The legislative branch exists in part to conduct oversight of executive agencies. It is time to exercise that power, and rein them in.

Mr. LAMALFA. Thank you, Mr. Pearce. We appreciate having you here today.

Let's proceed, then. We have our three witnesses from the first panel in place. Like all of our witnesses, your written testimony will appear in the full hearing record, so for this portion I ask that you keep your oral statement to 5 minutes. And that will be governed, of course, by the green light, the yellow, and then finally the red. Things get pretty heated with the red, so we ask that you adhere to that, much like a stoplight.

So with that, first up we will have Sheriff Perkins.

**STATEMENT OF JAMES D. PERKINS, SHERIFF, GARFIELD
COUNTY, UTAH**

Sheriff PERKINS. Thank you. I would like to thank Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and the members of the subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to testify in this oversight hearing.

I am James D. Perkins, Jr., Sheriff of Garfield County, Utah. In my more than 27 years of law enforcement experience, I have worked closely with many different Federal law enforcement agencies. I would like to focus today on what I see as a system-wide failure by the Bureau of Land Management law enforcement to accomplish its mission.

If we had time, I could talk all afternoon, giving you example after example of problems I have experienced with BLM law enforcement. My written testimony includes nine examples that will give this subcommittee an idea of some of the difficulties we face. And I would like to talk today about three examples in particular.

But before I begin, I want to make sure that you understand that I absolutely recognize the critical role that Federal law enforcement agencies play in my county. Garfield County is more than 85 times the size of the District of Columbia. About 93 percent of our county is managed by the BLM, Forest Service, and National Park Service. So coordinating with each other is not optional.

We have a long record of working hand-in-hand with Federal agencies, like the FBI, the DEA, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Forest Service, and the National Park Service. I am proud of the many successful operations and investigations we have done jointly. We may not agree on everything, but we work together for one main reason: our relationships are based upon mutual respect. And that is where BLM law enforcement has been different.

My first example shows exactly how BLM law enforcement views our relationship. While I was attending a drug task force meeting in Cedar City, Utah, a BLM law enforcement officer told me point blank that he really did not care about any authority that I had as the Garfield County Sheriff. He told me that he did not feel like he had to coordinate anything through my office. His statement left me speechless. This attitude of lack of respect, which I find reaches through many levels of BLM law enforcement, is what I believe is the cause of the problem.

Another example of attitude happened during a search and rescue operation. We received a call that a party was overdue, and a search and rescue team needed to be sent. In these kinds of life-and-death emergencies, time is of the essence, and we need as

much help as we can get to locate the vehicle to give us a starting point for the search.

I asked one of the dispatchers to call the BLM law enforcement officer that is located in the middle of our county to help in the search. The frustrated dispatcher told me, "Sheriff, it is a waste of time. If he will answer the phone or we do get in touch with him, all he is going to tell us he is off duty or he is out of hours."

My last example involves a complaint I received from a BLM field manager located in Escalante, Utah. On the night before the elk hunt was open, a BLM law enforcement officer posted "Road Closed" signs on a road that was actually open to the public. The BLM field manager received complaints about the illegal road closures, and he went to the area and started to remove the "Road Closed" signs.

The BLM law enforcement officer confronted the field manager and threatened to arrest him. He even stepped back and placed his hand on his service weapon. The field manager told me that he felt like his life was in danger.

These examples are not isolated incidents. They happen all the time, and not only in Garfield County. I have included in my written statement letters from the Western States Sheriffs Association, Utah Sheriffs, and Nevada State Sheriffs to be included in the official record.

Years ago we had similar problems with the Forest Service law enforcement, but we were able to resolve them. Dave Ferrell, the Director of Law Enforcement for the Forest Service based here in Washington, took the time to come to Garfield County personally and meet with me. Our discussion resulted in both a change in attitude and personnel, and the problems have resolved themselves.

I am confident that we could do the same with the BLM if we had the chance. Until then, BLM law enforcement will continue to cause problems for the Sheriff's Office, first responders, residents, visitors, and the local economy.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today, and I will be happy to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Sheriff Perkins follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SHERIFF JAMES D. PERKINS JR., GARFIELD COUNTY, UTAH

Thank you Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and members of the subcommittee for this opportunity to testify in this oversight hearing. My name is James D. Perkins, Jr., Sheriff of Garfield County, Utah. I have worked in law enforcement for more than 27 years and have significant experience in working with many different Federal law enforcement agencies. I would like to focus my testimony today on what I see as a system-wide failure by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) law enforcement to accomplish its mission.

If we had the time, I could take all afternoon giving the subcommittee example after example of problems that I have experienced with BLM law enforcement and its lack of coordination with local law enforcement. I've included several examples in this testimony that will give the subcommittee an idea of some of the difficulties that BLM law enforcement has created for Garfield County—examples that affect not only the Sheriff's Office, but also our first responders, residents, and visitors.

NEED AND HISTORY OF LOCAL AND FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT COORDINATION IN GARFIELD COUNTY

Before I begin, I would like to give you some background on Garfield County to explain why coordinating law enforcement activities with Federal agencies is so critical. Garfield County is more than 85 times the size of the District of Columbia. Including me, the Sheriff's Office employs only six full-time deputies across the county

to cover more than 3.3 million acres. Our law enforcement activities on public lands create a significant strain on our manpower and resources as we routinely are required to conduct emergency search and rescue operations and narcotic interdictions. We are often required to enlist the help of local volunteers, state police, and multi-county task force personnel.

Our law enforcement mission is made significantly more difficult because of the composition of the land ownership in our county and the number of people from home and around the world that come to see the beautiful landscape. About 93 percent of the area within Garfield County is managed by Federal agencies. We are home to three national parks, the Glen Canyon National Recreational Area, Dixie National Forest, and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Combined, these areas receive more than 1.5 million visitors each year. With this number of people and overlapping jurisdictions, coordinating with Federal agencies is not optional.

Accordingly, we have a long record of working hand-in-hand with Federal agencies like the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Forest Service, and the National Park Service. I am proud of the many successful joint operations and investigations that we have done. I have battled the Mexican Cartel as they moved their illegal marijuana growing operations into my county. I have worked with the FBI on a kidnapping case where I arrested the suspect in my jurisdiction. I have worked alongside DEA and FBI agents on an attempted assassination case where one of our local Adult Probation and Parole Officers was the target. While exercising a search warrant on this investigation, one of the suspects was shot. Because of the coordinated efforts of all the agencies involved, including Federal agencies, no law enforcement officers were injured during this operation.

As these examples show, I absolutely recognize the critical role that Federal law enforcement agencies play in my county. While we do not agree on everything, we are able to work together because our relationships are based on mutual respect. I respect the role of each of these agencies to enforce Federal law within their jurisdictions, and they respect my role as sheriff and the chief state law enforcement officer of the county.

Notably absent from these examples is any joint work with law enforcement from the BLM. It's because there is none. And that is what I want to focus on today, because I see this lack of coordination—rather, their refusal to coordinate—as a system-wide failure that needs to urgently be addressed.

LACK OF COORDINATION AND INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS OF BLM LAW ENFORCEMENT

BLM's attitude toward coordinating with local law enforcement is summed up best by a conversation I had with a BLM law enforcement officer while we were attending a drug task force meeting in Cedar City, Utah. He told me point blank that he really didn't care about any authority that I thought I had as the Garfield County Sheriff, and that he did not feel like he had to coordinate anything through my office. This statement left me speechless at the time, and, in my experience, it is representative of the lack of respect that BLM law enforcement has for local law enforcement. This lack of respect and choice to ignore the Garfield County Sheriff's Office makes my job significantly more difficult because the BLM is the largest land manager in Garfield County.

This refusal to coordinate, coupled with a lack of any meaningful oversight, has created a perfect environment where the abuse of Federal law enforcement powers can occur. We have had complaints of BLM law enforcement stopping people under the pretext of enforcing state law, and they have refused to provide me with documentation of their authority or jurisdiction to do so. They have detained people completely outside of BLM's jurisdiction on land managed by the Forest Service, illegally closed roads, and interfered with county emergency medical technicians, wasting time and resources. Local residents and visitors who feel they have been wronged by BLM law enforcement have little recourse but to come talk to me. The following examples are from a cross-section of these complaints, and I can assure that they are not isolated incidents. They happen all the time, and not only in Garfield County. I would note that the first is from a complaint that I received, not from a visitor or resident, but rather from a local BLM field manager.

I received a complaint from a BLM field manager located in Escalante, Utah. On the night before the mule deer hunt was to open, a BLM Law Enforcement Officer posted road closed signs on roads that were actually open to the public. The BLM field manager received complaints about the illegal road closures so he went to the area to investigate and remove the signs. The BLM law enforcement officer confronted the field manager as he was removing the signs and threatened to arrest

him. The BLM Law Enforcement Officer stepped back and placed his hand on his duty weapon. The BLM Field Manager stated that he felt like his life was in danger.

- Several visitors to Garfield County told me that they would never return because of the way they were treated by BLM law enforcement. These tourists were visiting the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and wanted to see a rock formation that was off the road. They parked their motorcycles off the roadway, within the county right-of-way, which is perfectly legal. When they returned, they were met by a BLM law enforcement officer, who threatened them with a citation and the impoundment of their bikes for not leaving them in the roadway.
- I have received complaints from citizens that live in Escalante, Utah. They reported that while they were on Forest Service property, a BLM law enforcement officer pulled them over for no apparent reason. The officer questioned them about what they were doing and they felt like they were being bullied. I contacted the District Forest Service Ranger in charge of the area and asked him if he had requested that the BLM law enforcement patrol on Forest Service property. He advised me that he had not and that he was also upset because he had received other complaints of similar activity. I contacted the BLM sergeant in law enforcement that is responsible for this area. This sergeant made excuses for the BLM law enforcement officer's actions and stated that they would get back to me. The sergeant eventually got back with me and advised me that the alleged allegations had taken place prior to her attaining the rank of sergeant, therefore they would not investigate. This didn't make any sense to me but that was the answer they provided.
- Garfield County Emergency Medical Service Director, Tammy Barton, reported to me that on three different occasions, a BLM law enforcement officer showed up on the scene of medical and search and rescue emergencies. The BLM officer refused to check in or sign the sign in sheet at the Incident Command, as is normal protocol. He took it upon himself to walk through the scene where an airplane accident was located within a State of Utah right of way. On another occasion, it was required to carry a patient out of a remote area to a landing zone where a medical helicopter could land to pick up this patient. The Incident Commander knew that carrying out the patient would take several hours. The BLM officer demanded that a helicopter be called immediately. Not only did the BLM officer again refuse to check in with the Incident Command, but he also took it upon himself to dispatch a helicopter to the scene after being told by the Incident Commander to wait until the patient could be carried out and was closer to the landing zone area. The medical helicopter arrived at the landing zone and sat there idling for approximately 4 hours. This resulted in the pilot having to return back to his station, get fuel, switch out pilots, and then return to the scene. This not only wasted time and money but further endangered the patient.
- I received reports from local ranchers that BLM law enforcement officers were seizing their empty protein supplement tubs as soon as the cattle had emptied them. The BLM law enforcement officer would take possession of the tubs and threaten the local ranchers with littering citations. I contacted the BLM's Special Agent in Charge and expressed my concern over the officer confiscating the tubs. I explained that the ranchers used these tubs for many different purposes after they were empty and certain types of tubs were returnable for a rebate when purchasing more of the protein. I told him that it was improper for the officer to remove these tubs and that the ranchers were not abandoning them. The Special Agent in Charge uncaringly laughed it off.
- It was reported to my office that additional roads had been illegally closed in the Spencer Flat area on the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. I proceeded to this area and found a large pile of limbs, logs, and rocks blocking access to this road. I received a report that a BLM law enforcement officer was seen with limbs and logs in the back of his vehicle in the area. The Monument's manager was contacted and he advised me that this road had been illegally closed. I questioned the local BLM law enforcement officer that was implicated and he denied any involvement. However, to date there have been no other road closures of this nature.

These examples trouble me a great deal, especially where tourism is affected. Tourism is the lifeblood of Garfield County's economy. While we have received many similar reports from visitors, I have to wonder how many others have simply chosen to leave the county and not return.

Another area where a lack of coordination is very evident is in search and rescue operations on the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. In recent history, we have had a number of fatalities for a lot of different reasons. I honestly cannot remember the number of people I have witnessed whose lives were nearly ended and then saved by Garfield County Sheriff's Office, Garfield County Search and Rescue, and use of the Utah Department of Public Safety (DPS) helicopter.

But these efforts are costly both in manpower and financial resources. From April 13, 2013 to March 11, 2014, I have spent a total of 469.75 hours of search and rescue time rescuing individuals. This does not count any training time for search and rescue—this is actual time spent on searches. From July 2, 2013 to April 29, 2014, I have 38.6 hours of use on the DPS helicopter. The helicopter's rate is \$1,700 an hour, which means the cost during that period for the helicopter is \$65,620.

Yet I have not received a single minute of help or assistance from any BLM officer, nor have I received one penny of assistance for search and rescue reimbursements from the BLM. Although search and rescue is primarily the sheriff's responsibility, the BLM does have an obligation to assist when requested. I think that it is time that the Bureau of Land Management stepped up and helped with these responsibilities. They also need to help with manpower and financially for the individuals that visit the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and other BLM grounds.

Although my dispatchers have attempted to contact BLM law enforcement for assistance in search and rescue operations, there always seems to be an excuse for why they can't help. It has risen to the point where my dispatchers have become completely frustrated with BLM law enforcement. Recently, we received a call that a party was overdue and a search and rescue team needed to be sent. In these kinds of life and death emergencies, time is often of the essence, and we needed as much help as we could get to locate the vehicle to give us a starting point for the search. I asked one of my dispatchers to call the BLM law enforcement officer that is located in the middle of our county to help with the search. The frustrated dispatcher told me, "Sheriff, it's a waste of time! If he will answer his phone or we do get in touch with him, all he is going to tell us is that he is out of hours or he is off duty."

RESOLVING THE PROBLEM

I mentioned in the beginning that my office has excellent working relationships with other Federal law enforcement agencies. This has not always been the case, but we have always been able to work through these issues so we can do our jobs effectively. For example, several years ago we had incidents, similar to those I've discussed above, happening with the Forest Service Law Enforcement from our area. Dave Ferrell, Director of Law Enforcement for the Forest Service, took the time to fly from Washington, DC to personally meet with me in Garfield County. Our discussions resulted in both a change of attitude and personnel, and the problems have resolved themselves. In fact, I am in the process of deputizing two Forest Service law enforcement officers, in addition to the three Bryce Canyon National Park Rangers I have deputized since I became sheriff in 2007.

I am confident that if we had the opportunity to engage with the BLM constructively, in a spirit of working together, we could resolve the problems. We are open to any opportunity to work toward resolution with the BLM, and would appreciate any help the subcommittee could provide in our efforts. Oversight hearings like this give us a voice that is often overlooked, and the evidence that has been submitted to the subcommittee without doubt provides sufficient justification for a change in the status quo.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the subcommittee for this opportunity to testify before you, and would be happy to answer any questions.

Mr. LAMALFA. Thank you, Sheriff. We appreciate it.

Now we will move to Commissioner Pollock from Garfield County, Utah as well.

Five minutes, please.

STATEMENT OF LELAND POLLOCK, COMMISSIONER, GARFIELD COUNTY, UTAH

Mr. POLLOCK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Grijalva. My name is Leland Pollock. I am a Garfield County

Commissioner. I chair the Utah State Association of Counties' Public Land Committee. I sit on a national Public Land Committee for the National Association of Counties.

And if you will indulge me for a moment, we have some teenage TARS members. If I could just have them stand. Thank you. They are with us coincidentally.

What I am going to get into today, very seldom do we come back here and offer solutions. But I do have one solution to this problem. Contracting when it comes to BLM law enforcement is critical. That is where relationships are forged. And relationships in the West, believe me, are everything. In rural areas, good relationships can be the difference between life or death, really literally.

Now, a couple of years ago—and by the way, these are not partisan issues, a good friend of mine, State Director Juan Palma of the BLM—he has nothing to do with the law enforcement side; he is the State Director—he was working with me to establish a contract.

This contract would have allowed our sheriff to deputize BLM employees, let the BLM law enforcement officers use all our resources, use our dispatch, and basically protect his safety as well as the safety of the county. These cooperative agreements pay the counties, the rural counties, to offer law enforcement, and they are a huge savings to the agency, no matter what agency it is.

A prime example of how well this works is in Kane County, on the popular Grand Staircase National Monument. You all have heard of that. We share that monument with Kane County. They had an agreement similar to the one that the State Director and myself had worked out, and it was working beautifully. You can talk to the locals on the ground from either side, the BLM, the local sheriff, anybody you want to talk to, and this is the way to do it. OK?

Unfortunately, I do not share that same relationship with the State Director of Law Enforcement. It is not because I do not want to. It is because it is impossible. Unfortunately, as well, this State Director of Law Enforcement canceled all of the contracts in the entire State of Utah.

Now, you have for the record a letter from our Lieutenant Governor stating how imperative it is for the state to get those contracts reestablished, and we are not just talking about fiscally. We are talking about safety for the entire law enforcement system. Now, going forward, also, if you look at my statement, you are going to find a NACO Sheriffs Resolution, which means every county in the United States supports contracts with the local sheriff.

Every county in the United States—this was passed on through my committee and through NACO, the National Association of Counties—every county in the United States also supports him as the chief law enforcement officer. He has been told many times by the BLM law enforcement side that he is not the chief law enforcement officer of the county. This is a paradox that needs to be fixed, and you all have the power to fix that.

Now, we sometimes in the West and in Utah—some of you folks back here may think that we are anti-government, and that is just not the case. We are reaching out today as well as we will back

in Utah to try to forge relationships, to try to work through these issues.

What I am recommending here today is that we start with contracts. These contracts work all across the West, and they are vital to what we do on the ground. And they are a much greater help, believe me. And a good man, Juan Palma, State Director of BLM in Utah, knew that when he tried to forge and enter into an agreement with Garfield County.

But also, I want to bring one point up really quick. I am running out of time. It is kind of unnerving to me that the state director can work on an agreement with a local county commissioner, and the law enforcement side has the authority to override that. That is troubling.

Anyway, thank you for your time. And Congressman Stewart, I know you went through a lot to be here today, and you are very much appreciated in the great State of Utah, believe me.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pollock follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LELAND F. POLLOCK, GARFIELD COUNTY, UTAH
COMMISSIONER

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva and members of the committee: my name is Leland Pollock, and I am a County Commissioner from Garfield County, Utah. I also serve as a member of the National Association of Counties Public Lands Committee and have been designated by my fellow commissioners in Utah as the Chairman of the Utah Association of Counties Public Land Steering Committee.

Garfield County is a scenic rural area roughly the size of Connecticut. Ninety-three percent of the land base is under Federal ownership, and I believe we are the only U.S. county that contains portions of three National Parks (Bryce Canyon, Capitol Reef and Canyonlands). We are also home to significant portions of the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, the Dixie National Forest, the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, two BLM field offices, and a small segment of the Fish Lake National Forest.

I grew up cherishing the lands in Garfield County as the son of a Park Service employee. An ex-marine, my father worked for Bryce Canyon National Park. My father's employment was outside strict law enforcement responsibilities, but because of his military experience, he was often called upon to assist NPS officers—especially in the most volatile situations. I observed with my own eyes proper methods for protecting and serving the people of the United States.

I am here today to testify on two issues regarding BLM law enforcement activities that have moved away from a public service philosophy: (1) polarization of BLM law enforcement personnel/bullying; and (2) cancellation of cooperative law enforcement agreements between BLM and local governments.

As a preface to my remarks I want to inform you that Garfield County has a cooperative and productive relationship with National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service law enforcement personnel. Things are not always perfect, but we work with them within the confines of the law and with honest consideration for the public. I also want to let you know we enjoy a very positive and productive relationship with Juan Palma, Utah's State BLM Director. We meet and talk on the phone frequently; and he has been attentive to our requests and has responded expeditiously and appropriately within his authority. Unfortunately, we cannot make the same statement regarding BLM law enforcement personnel. Discussing BLM law enforcement operations is my purpose today.

This is not our first attempt to resolve issues of bullying, intimidation and the lack of integrity exhibited by BLM law enforcement agents. We have tried locally, and earlier this spring Utah's Lieutenant Governor convened an executive level meeting to discuss law enforcement on Federal lands in Utah. The meeting was attended by the Lieutenant Governor Spencer Cox, Utah's Attorney General Sean Reyes, the Regional Forester, the Regional Chief of Law Enforcement for the Forest Service, Utah's State BLM Director, BLM's Chief of Law Enforcement, and numerous Federal, state and local leaders. The meeting was open, cooperative and productive, except for the participation of the BLM's Chief of Law Enforcement. The Lieutenant Governor of Utah caught BLM's Chief of Law Enforcement in a lie and

exposed in his deception. His arrogant behavior lacked integrity and was illustrative of his department's unacceptable culture.

Our concerns/complaints are not just a matter of hurt feelings. The policies of BLM's Chief of Law Enforcement have cost Garfield County real dollars. Last year Garfield County and the Utah State BLM Director worked out a cooperative agreement providing Garfield County Sheriff's office a contract for law enforcement on BLM land. The BLM was to reimburse the county a set amount that would have resulted in significant savings to the Federal Government. The County—with BLM concurrence—hired law enforcement staff, acquired vehicles and equipment, provided training and proceeded with implementation of the agreement. Contrary to the State BLM Director's orders and without concurrence, BLM's Chief of Law Enforcement canceled the agreement leaving Garfield County with a significant budget shortfall and staff operating in an area without an agreement. We are befuddled how one individual can override a State Director and negatively impact an entire county with impunity.

We need your help to correct these serious problems. Let me address the two issues cited above:

POLARIZATION OF BLM LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

Over the past decade or so we have observed and experienced an increasing hostility from BLM's officers. I am confident you are aware of recent, highly publicized actions involving BLM agents. But you may not be aware that much of the frustration by everyday citizens has resulted from lack of professionalism by local BLM officers. Some equate BLM's law enforcement operations to bullying and intimidation.

Submitted under separate cover is a list of actions that illustrate BLM's heavy handed authority. Three additional examples from only one BLM unit in Garfield County illustrate the problem.

Example 1. BLM law enforcement officers have been known to block open public roads asserted under Revised Statute 2477 and maintained by Garfield County with rocks, logs and debris. Such actions constitute a Class B Misdemeanor under Utah law.

Example 2. Immediately prior to a big game hunt authorized under Utah Law by the Utah Division of Wildlife resources, a BLM agent placed road closed signs in several county roads that accessed the hunting area. The BLM land manager heard about the problem and took a field trip to investigate. The land manager reports that during the investigation he was harassed and intimidated by the law enforcement officer. At one point the officer put his hand on his gun in an effort to discourage the land manager from continuing. This was a direct threat to an individual with management authority in the officer's own agency.

Example 3. BLM requested the county's help to install an underground waterline to serve wildlife, livestock, recreation and other public interests. The county offered to put the waterline in a county road to minimize any disturbance on Federal land. A BLM back country ranger observed county equipment being transported to the jobsite and followed county crews for more than 20 miles. When the county crews stopped the BLM officer got out of his vehicle and walked behind crew members harassing and interrogating them. Some crew members became so upset they returned to their vehicle to cool down. This occurred on a project where the county was donating thousands of dollars of equipment time and a road easement just to help BLM.

The cumulative effect of BLM law enforcement is disheartening, especially when I know we have good relationships with other agencies. Dispatchers have been rebuffed so many times by BLM agents that the county only contacts them as a last resort and with little hope for assistance.

CANCELLATION OF COOPERATIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGREEMENTS BETWEEN BLM AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

As mentioned above, we have a positive and healthy relationship with many Federal agencies and especially with Juan Palma, Utah BLM State Director. We have worked with Mr. Palma to develop a cooperative law enforcement agreement similar to those executed for neighboring counties; and he is supportive of moving forward in accordance with Federal law. However the Chief of Law Enforcement for BLM has unilaterally canceled contracts which has reduced coverage and increased costs.

The Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) states that the Secretary of the Interior shall contract with local law enforcement *to the greatest extent possible* for law enforcement services on public lands. Typically, BLM has cooperated with

local county sheriff departments to enforce state, local, local BLM laws on Federal land. Yet lately, BLM has refused to enter into such contracts due to resistance from BLM's Chief of Law Enforcement.

Earlier this spring Utah's Lieutenant Governor took steps to develop cooperative agreements and contracts in accordance with Federal law. The BLM agent in charge opposed such contracts but agreed to provide some additional information. However, to date—4 months later, no communication has been received from him and no improvement has occurred in BLM's heavy handed actions.

This testimony is not intended to only document complaints. We offer a simple solution: comply with FLPMA by contracting with local law enforcement to the greatest extent possible for law enforcement services on public lands. This may require direction to BLM's Chief Law Enforcement Officer, but it is compliant with Federal law and is supported by local BLM leadership. Such contracts will also cut Federal administrative costs, provide better service and increase public safety at a time when fiscal constraints demand more efficiency. This may require Congress clarifying the authority of BLM State Directors.

We are hopeful that after careful consideration, the BLM will take appropriate steps to better coordinate law enforcement with local governments in Utah and BLM law enforcement will enter into contracts as directed by Federal law. Thank you for the opportunity of speaking today.

NACO Sheriff's Resolution 2013

Issue: Local Law Enforcement on Public Lands

Proposed Policy: NACO urges all federal land management agencies to recognize and respect sheriffs (or the chief local law enforcement officer) in public land counties as the primary and chief law enforcement officer of the entire county. Federal agencies should execute cooperative agreements with counties to ensure fair and prompt federal payment of compensation for additional local law enforcement activities desired of sheriffs, and federal agencies submit their agents for deputization and accountability under local sheriff authority and control.

Background: Federal land counties are frequently impacted by lack of coordination from federal law enforcement officers. Federal officials fail to recognize the County Sheriff's role as the chief law enforcement officer within his/her jurisdiction; and, often, federal officers undermine local law enforcement efforts by usurping local authority in violation of established law. Counties are also forced to expend limited local funds to perform uncompensated law enforcement functions on federal land. This resolution is needed to encourage federal agencies to: a) recognize the sheriff's role as the chief law enforcement officer; b) work cooperatively with local government to coordinate law enforcement functions on federal land in accordance with established law; and c) develop cooperative agreements to compensate local government for services provided on federal land and to establish clear lines of authority.

Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact: There will be limited fiscal impact for urban areas. Rural areas, especially public land counties, can expect greater coordination with federal law enforcement officials, reduced duplication of effort, and increased funding resulting from cooperative agreements and clearly defined roles. Citizens will reap the benefits of more efficient responses to problems, reduced cost by eliminating duplication, a streamlined approach to law enforcement issues, and greater efficiency of all levels of government.

Mr. LAMALFA. Thank you, Commissioner Pollock.

At any moment, votes will be called on the House Floor for a series of votes, amendments, et cetera. So we will just work through this as we can here.

Mr. Gerber, you are up next, Commissioner Gerber.

**STATEMENT OF GRANT A. GERBER, ESQ., COMMISSIONER,
ELKO COUNTY, NEVADA**

Mr. GERBER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to come here today and represent my constituents in Elko County and represent many of the people in Nevada that are concerned. I believe this hearing regarding threats, intimidation, and bullying by Federal land management agencies is very appropriate at this time.

I am a fourth generation Elko County resident. Our family settled there in the mid-1800s, and I have been cowboying in that county since the 1940s. I am 72 years old. I served in Vietnam. Our family, besides having a ranch, we had a hunting camp for over 30 years.

But a major change has occurred in Elko County. The BLM and Forest Service agents are operating so far different than they did when I was a boy and as I grew up. At that time,, they were friendly. They came to the ranch. We worked with them. But over the years, that has changed.

They are predominately from outside the area and do not develop connections with the locals, and many of them start off with a belligerent attitude, even a commanding presence. They are especially offended if anyone opposes any Federal Government actions. And the worst are the Federal law enforcement agents that arrogantly announce that they are not governed by Nevada law but can enforce it if they choose.

Now we have been informed, without notice or hearings, that the BLM has determined that two more BLM law enforcement agents are necessary to control the people in Elko County. It is unacceptable to us, to have additional people imposed on us without our consent.

I am going to give you two quick examples of our problem. In the fall of 2012, three minors on their day off went up to cut wood on Spruce Mountain. They cut the wood, and after they came off the mountain, they stopped to readjust their loads.

They looked back, and here was a pickup flying down the road at them, and one of the minors said they were getting air as it came. And this BLM agent jumped out. He had two guns on him. He had a flak vest on him, dark glasses. He was belligerent. He told them that he was giving them a ticket for cutting wood in a wilderness study area.

They protested and said, "We've got permits here, and we were not on a wilderness study area." But because of the cost of driving 300 miles to Reno to contest it, and having to go down twice and hire an attorney, it would have cost them thousands of dollars to protest it.

So I heard about it and offered to represent them for free. And we got a ways into it, and I looked at the maps, and the law enforcement agent from the BLM was on the wrong mountain. To get to where he said the wilderness study area was, you had to go down the valley and up on the mountain on the other side. He did not know where he was. These people are, many of them, very unprofessional. They do not even know where they are.

We got that case dismissed, but only after he had called them and given them false information about when the hearing was

going to be, and that it had been dismissed. And we got that on their telephones.

But the most egregious is down at Battle Mountain at this point. In that district, the Battle Mountain BLM Manager, Doug Furtado, has been threatening, intimidating, and bullying the citizens down there. That Battle Mountain District covers a huge amount of the State of Nevada. It goes down and connects up with Clark County.

In Clark County, the BLM has succeeded in eliminating all 50 of the ranchers. There are no more ranchers on that district, according to the BLM regulations. The only one left standing there, is in their mind, still there illegally. In the Battle Mountain District, Mr. Furtado is attempting to do the same thing. In the last 2 years, he has eliminated over 10,000 head of cattle grazing on that district.

I was contacted, and volunteered to help these ranchers for free to see if we could change things. There are six families that this spring were given an order that—oh, I have run out of time. That's what happens with attorneys.

[Laughter.]

Mr. GERBER. But this is an issue that is clearly wrong, and we have to make changes, and we have to make them quickly.

Thank you very much. I would be happy to answer questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gerber follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF A. GRANT GERBER, COMMISSIONER, ELKO COUNTY,
NEVADA

My name is Grant Gerber. I am an Elko County Commissioner and a fourth generation descendant of ranchers that settled in Elko County, Nevada in the mid 1800s.

For over 35 years I have been serving as an attorney working on Federal Land issues.

A major change has been occurring in Elko County. When I was a boy and as I grew the few Federal Agents were mainly local or from rural areas and fit in well with the local area. They knew the people and worked cooperatively. Now the Federal Agents are predominantly from outside the area and do not develop connections with the locals as was done previously. Many start off with a belligerent attitude, even a commanding presence. They are especially offended if anyone opposes any Federal Government actions. The worst are the Federal Law Enforcement Agents that arrogantly announce that they are not governed by Nevada law, but can enforce it if they choose. Now we have been informed that, without notice or hearings, the BLM has determined that two more BLM Law Enforcement Agents are necessary to control the people in the Elko area. All of this is resulting in less use of Federal Lands by citizens as the citizens become afraid of being accosted and berated.

That has to change. Following are the most recent egregious examples in northern Nevada.

In the fall of 2012, three miners, on their days off, drove their pickups onto Spruce Mountain to cut winter wood. When they drove off of the mountain with the wood they cut they stopped to adjust their load. Suddenly, a pickup came flying down the road after them. One of the miners said it was coming so fast that it was catching air over the bumps in the road. The pickup slid to a stop and a man jumped out with two guns, flak vest, radio, tazer, handcuffs and with his pants tucked into jump boots. He belligerently announced that he was giving them a citation for cutting wood on a BLM Wilderness Study Area. When the miners told the agent that they had permits to cut and that they did not cut on a Wilderness Study Area, he would not listen. The agent told them that it was a Federal offense and not to contest the citation because the Federal Government always won. He gave each of the miners tickets of \$275. A boy was in one of the pickups and he was so intimidated that it made him cry.

The miners knew that they had not been on a Wilderness Study Area but it was going to cost them thousands to drive to Reno 300 miles away to Federal Court twice and hire an attorney to defend themselves. Additionally, they would miss at least 3 days of work. For these reasons, they decided to pay the fees and cut their losses. I heard about the situation and met with the miners. I told them that I had a criminal attorney friend in Reno and we would represent them for free. We reviewed the maps of the area and confirmed that the agent, Mr. Brad Sone, did not know where he was. *He was on the wrong mountain!* He cited the miners for cutting wood in a Wilderness Study Area on a mountain that was over 7 miles away down, across a valley and up the other side.

Before the preliminary hearing Mr. Sone called the miners and told them the date of the hearing had been changed. One of the miners called the court and learned that Mr. Sone had not told them the truth, that the date had not been changed. Then the agent called the miners again before the trial and told them the case had been dismissed. Again the miner called and learned that the case had not been dismissed. I do not practice criminal law, but criminal attorneys have told me that Sone's calls were illegal at worst, and if not illegal it was inappropriate for the arresting officer to contact the cited citizens. The agent had already intimidated them and now was continuing to intimidate and mislead them.

In Battle Mountain, Nevada the Battle Mountain BLM Manager Douglas Furtado has been "*threatening, intimidating and bullying.*" He has used BLM Law Enforcement to attempt to intimidate people from exercising their First Amendment rights of petition, speech, assembly, press and prayer. The Battle Mountain District over which Mr. Furtado presides is huge. It covers from Clark County in the south to I-80 in the north covering Nye County, (the largest county in the Nation), Eureka County, Lander County and Esmeralda County. Mr. Furtado has been eliminating much of the grazing in the Battle Mountain BLM District. Over 10,000 cattle have been removed in just the last 3 years. On one area alone, in June 2013, Furtado removed all 900 cattle that had been grazing each year for over 140 years. And in 2014 he did not allow any of those 900 cattle to graze even though the grass was over 2 feet high on much of the range. Because of these drastic grazing reductions the fire danger is excessive. Millions of animals have burned because of the management practices of the BLM and these actions by Mr. Furtado will result in the burning of millions more. Before the huge BLM reductions in grazing there were few fires. If Mr. Furtado succeeds in eliminating all the cattle in his district he will join the Clark County BLM District as "cattle free". In the 1980s there were over 50 ranchers with grazing rights in the Clark County District. Now there are no cattle authorized to graze on that district.

In March of 2014 I volunteered, for free, to help the ranchers in the Battle Mountain District reverse the unfair, illegal and morally corrupt practices of Douglas Furtado that were threatening millions of animals, destroying the lives of ranch families, harming the mining industry, hurting hunting and recreation and causing great harm to the economy. In working on this project I have learned many things about Mr. Furtado. He is vindictive and conniving. He has developed one tactic to an art form—"voluntary non-use."

In April a petition was created and passed throughout northern Nevada to have Mr. Furtado removed. Mr. Furtado sent a BLM law enforcement officer to the local hardware store where there was a petition to have him removed on the counter. The BLM Agent informed the store owner that it was a Federal offense to threaten or harass a BLM official. He then left the store for a few minutes, but then went back in and took photos of the petition. Steve P. Seldin, the store owner stated, "The officer appeared to be dressed as though he were going to war over seas, with black jacket, guns, etc. Only thing he may have needed to complete the uniform would be a steel helmet."

A GRASS MARCH/COWBOY EXPRESS was then organized to take the petition asking for Mr. Furtado to be removed to Governor Sandoval 320 miles on horseback. At the end of the ride the BLM had an agent there taking pictures of the participants. Many of those participants were intimidated because they rely on Federal Grazing Rights that Mr. Furtado controls.

Following are some issues that I am investigating as a result of my work with the ranchers in the Battle Mountain District. This investigation is ongoing and far from complete. I will supplement my testimony at this hearing with the results of this investigation.

VOLUNTARY NON-USE

That phrase is supposed to mean that the holder of the grazing right has voluntarily decided not to graze an area. Mr. Furtado has gone to ranchers and asked them to take “*voluntary non-use*” for part of their grazing. If they refuse or argue he then tells them that he will give them 100 percent cuts. So they then agree to the “*voluntary non-use*.” Other districts in Nevada use this tactic, but are much more subtle when doing it. The rancher that is intimidated into taking “*voluntary non-use*” is then afraid to complain about it because they did it “*voluntarily*.”

One rancher is reported to have asked Mr. Furtado if the BLM would please remove some of the horses that were overrunning the range as required by Congress. Mr. Furtado is reported to have told him that he would not remove any horses until he had removed all the cattle from the Battle Mountain District.

In February of 2014 Mr. Furtado announced to six extended ranching families, the Tomera, Filippini and Mariluch families that they would not be allowed to turn any cattle out on Mount Lewis during 2014. Their 10-year grazing licenses authorized them to turn out over 2,000 head of cattle in March. They argued with Mr. Furtado, but he refused to budge. I prepared a petition demanding that Mr. Furtado be removed from his position as the Battle Mountain BLM Manager. That petition now has many signatures and is continuing to gain signatures. Some of the ranchers have refused to sign because of fear of retaliation by Mr. Furtado.

On May 17 a GRASS TOUR of Mount Lewis was conducted with Nevada State Senator Pete Goicoechea, Assemblymen John Ellison and Ira Hansen, the Lander County and Elko County Commissions. There were over 200 citizens on the tour that saw the grass that was over 2 feet high. This information was published in the newspapers along with the announcement that a GRASS MARCH would go from Elko to Battle Mountain on May 26 and a COWBOY EXPRESS would then go from Battle Mountain to the Capital in Carson City to deliver petitions to Governor Sandoval requesting that Mr. Furtado be removed. The Washington BLM office sent a representative to review the condition of the range and immediately after he came Mr. Furtado met with the ranchers and agreed to let them graze their cattle in 2014. So finally 2½ months after they should have had their cattle out on the mountain they began turning cattle out. But Mr. Furtado's actions had caused them hundreds of thousands of dollars of loss. And because the low country was not grazed off when it should have been there is a tremendous amount of fuel that has now turned brown and is ripe to burn threatening the lives of tens of thousands of animals and the rancher's cattle.

It is to the credit of the Washington BLM that Mr. Furtado was required to turn the cattle out, but immediately he began a program of intimidation to justify his earlier decision to not allow any cattle to graze on Mount Lewis in 2014. I am researching that intimidation and will supplement this testimony with that information. As a part of that intimidation Mr. Furtado took Ms. Fite of Western Watersheds on a tour of Mount Lewis and refused to allow any of the ranchers to participate.

To shed further light on the tactics of Mr. Furtado and help the public to understand the great threat to wildlife because of the increased fire danger and the great harm he has caused and is causing to the ranchers, miners, hunters, recreationist and the economy a GRASS MARCH/COWBOY EXPRESS will leave Carson City to Washington, DC on September 29, 2014 crossing the continent in approximately 20 days. It will be the fastest crossing of the Nation on horseback in history. A horse and rider will lope 5 miles and then pass the petitions asking for the removal of Mr. Furtado to another rider who will then lope 5 miles.

If everyone in Nevada, all County Commissions, the Nevada State Legislature and the Governor and even all of Congress wanted to remove Mr. Furtado it could not be done without an impeachment proceeding. Mr. Furtado works for the Executive Department and the Executive Department is the only entity that can remove him. That is an intolerable situation. There has to be local control and the only way that can be accomplished is for the Federal Government to transfer the BLM lands to the states. If Mr. Furtado was an employee of the State of Nevada he would have been removed in 2012 or 2013 and certainly by this time in 2014.

The BLM law enforcement agents in Nevada report to Salt Lake City and there is no local input. And the BLM is very reluctant to investigate stories of abuse. When the Elko County Commission considered the woodcutting incident the BLM was outraged and said the miners should have taken their complaint to the BLM. At an Elko County Commission meeting in the spring of 2013 the BLM said they would investigate the incident. But the investigation was not begun until the spring

of 2014 and is proceeding very slowly. The investigator from California is starting to ask the right questions, but so much time has passed, over 14 months, that when the report does come out it will be an old story. Contrast that with what would have occurred if the citation had been issued by an Elko County Sheriff's Deputy. Because the Elko County Sheriff is an elected official and answers to the citizens of Elko County the Sheriff would have done an immediate investigation and taken appropriate action. If he found the officer had acted improperly he would have either disciplined him or fired him and that information would have been public. There is no corresponding accountability within the BLM. Even if the BLM, after this delayed investigation, finds that the agent acted improperly the BLM will keep any actions it takes secret to protect the reputation of the BLM.

On January 9, 2013 a delegation of the leadership of BLM law enforcement from Salt Lake City came to the Elko County Commission meeting and proposed a Memorandum of Understanding that would give the BLM Law Enforcement Agents the ability to cite for Elko County ordinances and Nevada State law. The Commission was opposed. The delegation then went on to explain that it really did not matter what Elko County did the BLM was going to enforce Elko County and Nevada State Law if the BLM decided to do so, including citing drivers on Elko County roads, Nevada State Highways and I-80 because those roads and highways passed through BLM lands.

In 1930 Gandhi began the Salt March that eventually gained freedom for the citizens of India. He said that it was the inalienable right of Indian citizens to have freedom and enjoy the fruits of their toil. Likewise the citizens of Nevada have the inalienable right to freedom and the fruits of their toil. The combined might of the BLM, especially BLM law enforcement and BLM Managers like Mr. Furtado are depriving Nevadans of their freedom and the fruits of their toil.

Congress must act to restore freedom.

Enclosures:

Exhibit A: Hansen Letter

Exhibit B: Mariluch Letter

Exhibit C: Seldin Letter

Exhibit A

FYI - My open letter to Governor Sandoval from Assemblyman Ira Hansen District 32 regarding the BLM Battle Mountain District Manager Doug Furtado...

AN OPEN LETTER TO GOVERNOR SANDOVAL

Dear Governor,

As the Assemblyman for District 32, I represent Lander County and the Argenta BLM grazing district. I want to insure you are fully informed on the increasingly unreasonable and nearly tyrannical actions of the BLM there, especially the conduct of BLM District Manager Doug Furtado.

My involvement started this spring when I was contacted by State Senator Pete Goicoechea about an upcoming "allotment" meeting to be held between the permittees and the BLM. I contacted Mr. Furtado, asking him for details on when and where the meeting was to take place. He informed me I was mistaken; there was no such meeting. I then called Senator Goicoechea back and told him he was apparently mistaken.

However, after Mr. Furtado hung up with me, he called Mr. Pete Tomera, a permittee, and read him the riot act. He threatened him for notifying both Senator Goicoechea and myself about the meeting, and told him if Assemblyman Ira Hansen or Senator Goicoechea show up, he will shut down the meeting.

Mr Furtado flat out lied to me. There was a meeting scheduled, exactly as Senator Goicoechea had alerted me to.

Following Furtado's threats, Mr. Tomera contacted Senator Goicoechea and he, much agitated, again contacted me and told me to be sure and be at the meeting.

This blatant lie and Furtado's threats are simple illustrations of what the permittees have been dealing with for years.

I then met with Amy Leuders, Nevada BLM Director, and her assistant, Raul Morales in an effort to bypass Furtado. Instead, they showed me photos of poor range conditions sent in by Furtado. There seemed to be no interest in seeking a middle ground.

I then attended an all day tour on May 11th of the Argenta allotment. Contrary to the photos from Furtado - taken in February - the range is in excellent condition. Both the riparian habitat along the streams and springs and the uplands were in excellent condition. Without exaggeration, native grasses waved like wheat fields in the breeze, and on recent fire scars, cheatgrass was thick and already a foot high. These conditions are perfect for grazing - or fire. Several hundred people are witnesses and the photos and videos taken by many there are proof beyond dispute. I would love to escort you or your staff, by car or horseback, all around the Argenta district, and you can see for yourself who the liars are. Incidentally, the BLM was invited but chose to not show up.

One other disturbing development: a petition to remove Furtado is circulating in Northern Nevada. One is available in the Battle Mountain hardware store. When the petition was first introduced, a fully armed BLM cop, bullet proof vest and all, showed up at the hardware store. The heavily armed BLM agent asked for the store owner, Mr. Steve Seldin. The BLM agent then informed him that it was a crime to attempt to intimidate or harass a BLM official. After reading through the petition, he told Mr. Seldin the petition was "O.K." and left. Clearly, this was an attempt to intimidate. It also is a violation of a constitutional right - to petition our government for a redress of our grievances.

Governor, I have attempted to work with the BLM and local officials to resolve this - unsuccessfully. I ask you for additional assistance. Mr. Furtado is the root of the problem. I ask you to use your authority to protect the hardworking, honest people in my district and see that he is replaced. The situation is heating up. Action is needed now.

Ira Hansen Assemblyman District 32

Exhibit B

Shawn and Angie Mariluch
 Filippini Ranching Company
 HC 61 Box 75
 Battle Mountain, NV 89820
 June 3, 2014

Dear Officials of the *Nevada Department of Agriculture*:

This letter is another example of Doug Furtado's unprofessionalism and insulting ways as a public servant. On May 19, 2014 we went to the BLM office to get our license and pay our fees after our Range Consultant, Bob Schweigert, had made up a management plan for our allotment on Argenta. Adam Cochran came out to say there would not be a license or a bill at this time and that they would be meeting with us soon. Doug popped out and said he would like to meet with us about a recent letter we had sent him. Then out of the blue he started slamming our Range Consultant, Bob Schweigert. He went on to say in a mean and loud voice that Bob Schweigert did not know anything and the worst think about him is that he never learned anything because he never worked for the BLM long enough! He continued insulting him saying he could sway his monitoring results any way he wanted. This was so rude and uncalled for, and it upset us to no end as Bob is a very respected professional and takes his job very seriously.

After this, we met with the BLM on May 22, 2014 to work out and discuss a license to turn out on. Chris cook was in charge and right of the bat, shut down Bob Schweigert when he tried to present our monitoring results. He would not only let him make his presentation, he would not even let him even talk. When Bob asked if they would share their monitoring they said no! They would not even let our spokesman and representative represent us! They said it was a take it or leave it situation! Mind you this agreement, written up by Doug Furtado, would take away our due process if signed. What public service government agency in the USA would write a document that takes away all due process? This is simply appalling; we are not a dictatorship yet in this country.

Overall, on both occasions we were treated quite shabbily to say the least!

Thank you very much for your time concerning this matter.

Sincerely,

Filippini Ranching Company

Exhibit C

7/21/14

Royal Hardware
 404 East Front Street
 Battle Mountain, Nevada 89820
 (775) 635-2422

An officer from/representing the BLM, arrived at Royal Hardware to review the petition to have Doug Furtado removed from the BLM office. The officer stated his business as, ...making sure there were no threats towards Doug Furtado himself, or his family... However, his attire seemed deliberately intimidating. The officer appeared to be dressed as though he were going to war over seas, with flack jacket, gun, etc. Only thing he may have needed to complete the uniform would be a steel helmet. He then took pictures of the petition, and left.

/s/ Steven P. Seldin
 Steven P. Seldin

Mr. LAMALFA. Thank you, Mr. Gerber. You heard the buzzer go off here, so votes are underway. But I think we have enough time to do one question on each side before we have to recess for a little while to go do Floor votes. So we want you to stick around. You have traveled, and we want to have the chance to do the full round of questions, if you would like.

So I will recognize myself for 5 minutes here, and ask Commissioner Pollock, and Sheriff Perkins you can jump in as well, but we want to know what the impact is on your Garfield County budget as a result of the enforcement contracting agreement with BLM falling through.

Sheriff PERKINS. I am going to take just a few seconds, and then give it to Commissioner Pollock.

One of the impacts is going to be—I have another example where I actually have had people tell me that they will never return to my county because of the way they were treated by BLM law enforcement for simple things that they did that were not illegal. They parked their motorcycles in the borrow pit and walked over to a rock cropping, and were threatened with a citation and impoundment of their bikes. And these people are good people.

Mr. LAMALFA. Could you elaborate on that? They parked their motorcycles—how was that?

Sheriff PERKINS. Sorry. The borrow pit is a part of the county road right-of-way where the water drains.

Mr. LAMALFA. For those that are watching, so you are talking there is a roadway and there is the edge of the road where it is lower. That is the borrow pit?

Sheriff PERKINS. That is the borrow pit, yes. They parked their bikes down there so they did not leave them on the roadway, and they walked over to a rock cropping. When they came back, this is when they were met by this BLM ranger and told they should have left their bikes on the roadway.

Mr. LAMALFA. In the middle of the road?

Sheriff PERKINS. Well, on the edge of the road or on the roadway. They were threatened with a citation—

Mr. LAMALFA. Is it a narrow road?

Sheriff PERKINS. No. It is a two-lane road. It is a dirt road.

Mr. LAMALFA. Is it a paved road? A dirt road?

Sheriff PERKINS. A dirt road, but two lanes. Wide enough for two vehicles.

Mr. LAMALFA. So there was other traffic that might be coming, trucks and cars?

Sheriff PERKINS. Absolutely. It is a busy road.

Mr. LAMALFA. Logging trucks? Larger vehicles?

Sheriff PERKINS. Tourists. It is down the Hole-in-the-Rock Road, if you are familiar with the area.

Mr. LAMALFA. So the average person might think it is wise to pull your machine off and park it—

Sheriff PERKINS. Absolutely. You would not want to leave anything in this roadway.

Mr. LAMALFA. OK. And the gentleman was cited for that?

Sheriff PERKINS. He was not cited. He was threatened with a citation. They told me that they were bullied and mistreated, were their exact words. So that affects our economy a great deal, when

people will not return to our beautiful county because of the way that the law enforcement treated them.

Mr. POLLOCK. Thank you, Sheriff. Fiscally, you have to remember—let me frame this a little bit and put it into perspective; 93 percent of our county is federally owned; 3½ percent is state. So we have 3½ percent of that county to tax; 87 percent of that revenue goes to the school district.

So we can operate our county for 16 days from property tax revenue. So I am glad you asked that question. These contracts would have been vital. And again, this is nobody's fault on the State Director's behalf. He came down. I spent a full day with him on the monument. And he could see the problem.

And we worked out a cooperative agreement verbally, and he would have carried through on this. This man has integrity. He would have carried through on a contract that I believe was \$120,000 a year to cover another county deputy and provide additional services from all deputies. They would have been at his disposal.

So we hired a deputy in good faith. Now, when we hired this deputy, bear in mind he is still working for us. So we have the deputy, the additional deputy, which is needed. Whether it can be afforded or not is questionable. Now, bear in mind, property tax is how most counties survive. We survive from intergovernmental revenue.

So from a budgetary standpoint, things like this are very troubling to me.

Mr. LAMALFA. Thank you.

Mr. Gerber, would you like to touch on that subject as it affects Nevada?

Mr. GERBER. Yes. We have just done some recent studies, and the cost of the Federal Government is in the multi, multi millions. And that is why it is imperative that these lands be transferred from the Federal Government to the states so that we can survive, not just for the reasons that we have about the intimidation and the bullying.

But if the Federal agents were not there and it was state agents, we would do well, if county sheriffs could take care of things. But as a result of this, we have situations like in Battle Mountain, where the agent came at the request of the Battle Mountain manager and intimidated a store owner that had a petition there, saying that if there was any threats to Federal agents, he would be arrested. And it was purely done for intimidation purposes. There are those kinds of intimidation things we cannot accept.

Mr. LAMALFA. Thank you to our panelists. I will recognize Mr. Grijalva for 5 minutes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am just going to ask some questions for clarification, some of the inconsistencies that I want clarified or at least explained. We make a lot of decisions based on conjecture in this body sometimes.

On the issue in which we have BLM being, based on the experiences in Garfield and Nevada, categorized as an organization that—the generalization is this is system-wide, that it occurs everywhere. I think that is a leap too far for me in terms of conjecture. I think data for this committee, and verifiable examples that the agency has a chance to respond to, and the Members can deliberate

and see what they feel, I think would be the appropriate way to go.

But in terms of just clarification, Commissioner Pollock, Garfield County, as I understand it, passed a resolution declaring that Federal law enforcement authority—I am assuming specifically BLM—is not recognized in the county.

Now, if the county chooses not to recognize Federal authority, why the advocacy for Federal funding? That is where there is some inconsistency. Either you recognize the legitimacy of the Federal Government in the sense of law enforcement in this instance, and want to be a partner and deal with the contractual issues that have been brought up, or you do not. Am I misreading that resolution and your statements?

Mr. POLLOCK. No, Ranking Member. Actually, I am glad you asked that question. That resolution, believe me, was a last resort. That resolution has just been passed. What that resolution is doing is protecting our citizens. Now, I have been nice enough not to speak of the bullying going on, but I am going to give you a couple of examples.

Mr. GRIJALVA. No. That is OK. I only have 5 minutes. But I wanted to get to the specific question I asked you, about the inconsistency.

Mr. POLLOCK. The inconsistency? That is fine, and I can deal with that. If the BLM would like to come forward and forge a relationship and sign contracts, absolutely. We would recant that resolution. But bear in mind, a resolution is not a legal document. When we have to—

Mr. GRIJALVA. OK. I was going to bring up that next. But it is a formalized opinion by the—

Mr. POLLOCK. Absolutely. It is what we have to do in extreme situations. And believe me, Congressman, this is an extreme situation. These are not partisan issues. And if the BLM would like to forge something by way of contracts, not just with Garfield but the entire State of Utah—and it is not just Garfield County that has created these resolutions; four other counties have done the same and followed suit.

Believe me, it is a last resort. And I really do not think there are inconsistencies simply because we reached out to try to resolve this. We tried to resolve this.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Do you believe that based on Utah State law, that that provides Garfield County, Mr. Commissioner, with the authority to operate roads within the National Parks and the National Monuments?

Mr. POLLOCK. You mean as far as maintain, Congressman?

Mr. GRIJALVA. Operate. Yes.

Mr. POLLOCK. Yes. We are already doing that. We maintain them as we speak. If we did not maintain them—their budgets have been cut to the point we have to maintain BLM roads or they will be closed by way of weather. On the forest, you would not be able to see the popular Dixie National Forest without our road maintenance program. So we are maintaining those roads as we speak at our expense.

Mr. GRIJALVA. I think the last one—and I appreciate that—do you recognize BLM's authority to enforce Federal law on the public lands and in Garfield County?

Mr. POLLOCK. OK. Where they run into trouble with us as far as us recognizing that authority is if they affect the health, welfare, and public safety of our citizens. If they do so, then it is my job and the sheriff's job to protect the health, welfare, and public safety of the citizens in our county.

And believe me, this is protection that our citizens need. And it does not matter what the adversary is. If they are being threatened in any way, it is our job—when we were sworn in, we took an oath to protect the health, welfare, and public safety of the citizens of our county. So in that sense, we need to protect our citizens. That is our job.

Mr. GRIJALVA. But there is an acknowledgment, I hope—or that is my own preference—there is an acknowledgment that the enforcement of Federal law is BLM's prerogative?

Mr. POLLOCK. It depends on the situation. And I am telling you right now—I am telling you right now—

Mr. GRIJALVA. OK. Thank you.

Mr. LAMALFA. We have to stop here. We are going to recess for—I hate to guess time on the House of Representatives on real time. It looks like we made up 30 seconds on the clock here, but approximately 35, 40 minutes to get through the votes we have on the Floor.

So please stay if you can, and then we will finish up this first round of questions, then have our second panel. So thank you for your indulgence. We will recess for a little while.

[Recess.]

Mr. LAMALFA. We will resume with the hearing of the Public Lands Subcommittee. Thank you for your patience, you all, as we conducted our Floor business. It always seems to take longer than you would hope. But anyway, thank you for staying. We were in the middle of our first round of questions for Panel I, so I would now recognize the gentleman from California, Mr. McClintock, for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The stories you have told are similar to stories that my office is constantly receiving. I have the Sierra Nevada of California. Some of our counties—Alpine, for example—96 percent of the land area of that county is administered by the Federal Government.

Mr. Gerber, the change in attitude that you reported over a generation is very similar to what I have observed as well in my time in California. The frustration that we have for some very good reasons. Our Constitution is founded on a separation of powers. Congress has the sole authority to make the law, but the President has the sole authority to enforce it.

So my question of you, in speaking of essentially the administration of these agencies and the administration of the law, that is beyond our powers as a Congress. Our power is to enact legislation. What changes do you believe need to be made in order to right this wrong?

Let me throw out a couple of suggestions. One of them is, I do not understand why land managers have to be armed. Should not

the law enforcement on these lands be left to local law enforcement agencies?

Mr. GERBER. Without question, Congressman. The sheriff is and should be respected and be the chief law enforcement area of a county. He is elected locally. That was the purpose of the Revolution in the first place, is to have local control.

As a result of what has occurred, the Federal Government continues to increase its position in every one of these states. And so at the end of the day, the only solution, the only solution big enough, is to transfer the BLM and Forest Service lands to the states so we get back to what the Founding Fathers intended.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Are you suggesting transferring the entire lands to the states, or law enforcement responsibility to the states?

Mr. GERBER. The land itself. Six states have passed legislation that has begun taking us in this area, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, Nevada, and Arizona, and it appears that Alaska is going to be next. We have made significant strides in the eastern states and in the southern states because they are beginning to realize that they should not be sending their tax dollars out there to waste money on these fires that would not occur if the locals had control.

If the locals had control, we would have it grazed. We would be logging. And as a result, millions of animals would be saved because these fires kill millions every year. And then all the easterners would benefit because the pollution would not be coming this direction.

So we are in a position where things can change, and that is why we are here. We want that change to occur, and we think that the western states should have the same freedoms as the eastern states. And we believe that the enabling acts of the western states are exactly the same as the enabling acts of these eastern states.

In Illinois and Indiana and Missouri, they had 90 percent of their land controlled by the Federal Government in the 1820s, and they got it changed because they banded together. So hopefully we can get that done, sir.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. It is interesting to note that, as I said, I have a county where 96 percent of the land is controlled by the Federal Government. Overall, I believe about 42 percent of California is controlled by the Federal Government.

It is interesting to note that the Federal Government only controls 25 percent of the land area of the District of Columbia. Here is the national capital, a Federal district, with all of the national malls and buildings and other public works. That amounts to about 25 percent of the land area of Washington, DC.

Mr. GERBER. Well, at the time that was set up, the Founding Fathers were still in charge.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. LAMALFA. The gentleman yields back.

I will recognize the gentleman from Colorado, Mr. Tipton, for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIPTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank our panel for taking the time to be able to be here. For Members out of Utah, I am out of Colorado. We probably have some very common experiences that are there.

Commissioner Gerber, I would like to question you. We had Secretary Jewell before the Natural Resources Committee, and we have had a lot of issues in Colorado, as I believe we have probably in Nevada, certainly over into Utah, with road closures, which have been noted in some of the testimony.

The Department of the Interior, the BLM, the Forest Service, have they ever approached you in any type of consultation in regard to road closures?

Mr. GERBER. Elko County met with the Forest Service over a hundred times during the period that the Forest Service was going through its travel management plan, and at the end of the day Elko County got nothing that they asked for, and they have closed hundreds of miles. In the West, they have closed thousands of miles of road, and the local people were just ignored.

So roads are being closed, and that also results in increased fire. Millions of animals killed. It is an intolerable situation, sir.

Mr. TIPTON. This might be a question for the entire panel. Given some of the road closures—we have a vast expanse of public lands throughout the West—from a sheriff's standpoint in terms of public safety, when we are responding to a forest fire or if there are other problems that are going on, have these road closures impacted your ability to be able to service your communities public safety-wise?

Sheriff PERKINS. Absolutely. Let me answer that. Absolutely. I had a search and rescue just last year where an elderly gentleman had been gone for over 24 hours. This man was in his 80s. Southern Utah is big and vast, like Colorado. A lot of this area, there were old ATV trails that had been closed off. We were using the helicopter, with no avail.

But I actually had to go open personally—I went and opened these trails for my search and rescue to get in and save this man's life.

Mr. TIPTON. So it is a matter of actual safety?

Sheriff PERKINS. Yes.

Mr. TIPTON. And Sheriff, just by way of a little bit of background, how long have you been in law enforcement?

Sheriff PERKINS. I have been around for a long time. At the end of this year, I will have 28 years—8 years as sheriff, 20 years before that as a deputy.

Mr. TIPTON. Great. Twenty-some-odd years, basically, of experience. Growing up, we dealt a lot with the BLM. Dealt a lot with the Forest Service. And effectively, they were community members. But it seems from your testimony that we are starting now to see changes in terms of some of the administrative policy that is coming out.

Do you see this as a systemic, out of Washington, top-down sort of an approach, or is it more at the local level?

Sheriff PERKINS. Well, I will tell you, I am not sure because like with the Forest Service, I am here to tell you that a couple of years ago I had the very same problems with the Forest Service as I do with the BLM today. They just would not work with me.

But after some personnel changes and after the director came to not only the Utah Sheriffs Association but Western States Sheriffs, and eventually to Garfield County, I've seen some good changes. And I have an extremely good working relationship with the Forest

Service now, like I always have had with the DEA and the FBI and Immigration.

In fact, I have a contract sitting on my desk. I am going to deputize two Forest Service law enforcement officers for Garfield County. Last Friday we just had a mission where we had a shooting suspect that was up in our hills, and I sent a deputy along with this Forest Service officer for backup.

So the BLM, I do not know where it stems from. I wish it was that easy. I think, and I am being candid here, and maybe that is kind of a fault I have, but there need to be some personnel changes. There have been so many bridges burned, I do not know if they can ever be repaired.

I want to work with these people. You people, please, go through these letters that I have provided you from other agencies, other sheriffs, and these people, they want to work with the BLM. They really do. But they need the BLM to recognize their law enforcement authority.

Mr. TIPTON. So is this a communication problem or is it more to the point you simply are not being heard?

Sheriff PERKINS. I think that they just do—the people that I have in my area, and I am speaking as Garfield County Sheriff, they have a problem with recognizing the sheriff as the chief law enforcement agency.

And you need to understand that if they have operations that involves a drug eradication program where they bring helicopters in my county, they need to go through me with that, on that kind of stuff, because—and this has happened—I have other situations that are going on that I may not want a helicopter over a certain area at a certain period of time because it could actually put people's lives in danger on other operations.

So they need to coordinate things with the sheriff. The sheriff is like Congressmen and Senators and all the other elected people. We are the people's representative, and it is our responsibility to oversee the law enforcement in our counties.

The FBI, when they come through my county, I get a phone call if they have something going on. The DEA, they are my right hand when it comes to big drug seizures and these cartel gardens that we have dealt with. I respect the Federal Government agencies, and they have a place. But the sheriff is the chief law enforcement officer of the county.

Mr. TIPTON. Thank you, sir.

Mr. LAMALFA. Thanks, Mr. Tipton.

We have completed the first round of questioning by those available on the panel here, so I will recognize myself in a brief second round of questioning here as well.

Sheriff Perkins, I do not imagine you are the only sheriff that is experiencing these activities and actions in your state or maybe even neighboring states. Do you know of other jurisdictions or other sheriffs that feel the same way?

Sheriff PERKINS. Once again, when you folks get a chance to go through the packet that I have provided you, there are going to be letters from a Nevada sheriff. There are going to be letters from western states sheriffs. There are going to be letters from several other sheriffs throughout Utah.

Yes. It is a problem in the western United States, not just in Garfield County. This is not just a Garfield County problem. This is a western United States issue.

Mr. LAMALFA. Other sheriffs you have talked to express concern?

Sheriff PERKINS. Oh, absolutely. They will pour their hearts out in these letters. If I may, I just want to read one paragraph from a sheriff in Lincoln County, Nevada, I think that is where he is from. And this is the problem. This pretty much says it all:

“Over the past few years I have continued to try to work with the BLM on issues in Lincoln County, but tensions have been very high. A few months ago, I had occasion to speak to a BLM employee and was discussing issues between counties and Federal agencies. The BLM employee pointed to a flagpole that was near to us and said, ‘See that American flag? It is above the Nevada flag, and you need to remember that’.”

That is the problem.

Mr. LAMALFA. Interesting. Well, the BLM had guidelines and rules that they are supposed to follow, and they have a handbook that their officers are supposed to use. So what do you think is in that handbook as far as their interaction with the state and local laws on that?

Sheriff PERKINS. First of all, and I have talked to the BLM and they recognize that they have—and I recognize that they have—proprietary jurisdiction. And this is the definition of that. It’s in the Eisenhower Report. It has been around for a while. “The United States has acquired some right or title to an area within a state, but has not obtained any measure of the state’s authority over the area.” That’s what it is.

Now, in their own handbook, in their own rules, let me read you this, if I can find it. “BLM law enforcement must not enforce state and local laws without a written law enforcement agreement with the state and local agencies that has authority to grant state law enforcement authority to Federal law enforcement officers.” That is in their own rule book.

Mr. LAMALFA. OK. Thank you. That is very telling.

Commissioner Pollock, what has your relationship been like? Have you engaged them? Have you dialoged very much with these folks in order to come to an agreement as gentlemen instead of perhaps the heavy hand of the Federal law?

Mr. POLLOCK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You are talking about the law enforcement side of it?

Mr. LAMALFA. Yes.

Mr. POLLOCK. Yes. In fact, the entire State of Utah convened a special hearing during the legislative session. The Lieutenant Governor, myself, and several others had the Director of Law Enforcement of BLM—I think he is over Nevada and Utah—in that meeting, and there was Utah State legislative leadership, Attorney General Sean Reyes, and many of the leaders of the State of Utah. And we were up—

Mr. LAMALFA. How did that go? My time is running short. How was the dialog, or was it a useful dialog?

Mr. POLLOCK. Not good. It was very, very petulant coming from the Director of Law Enforcement. In fact, there was no one in the

room, including the Lieutenant Governor of the State of Utah, that could get along with this guy.

So yes, that is a great question. And we have had problems that we cannot get through. And that is why we are asking, the only solution that we can see is a personnel change.

Mr. LAMALFA. OK. Thank you. We have heard that already a couple times.

Commissioner Gerber, the terminology, "voluntary non-use," is one that has come up and can be used in certain ways. Why do you not expound upon that for a moment in my remaining time?

Mr. GERBER. It is supposed to mean that the holder of the grazing right voluntarily relinquishes his grazing for a year or 2 years.

Mr. LAMALFA. Why would they do that?

Mr. GERBER. Most of the time they do not want to do that. But what happens is that in the case of Mr. Furtado, he went to them and said, "Look. I want you to reduce your grazing by 50 percent," in some cases 75 percent. And they said, "Well, what happens if we do not?" And he said, "Well, I will reduce you 100 percent, then."

So with a gun at their head, they say, "OK, we will accept that because we have to." And then when you ask them about it, they do not want to talk about it because they voluntarily relinquished it.

Now, other districts—and I represent lots of ranchers and have over the years—they do not want to ever take that. But in subtle ways, the agencies in other districts do it, too, but none of them with the heavy-handed approach that Mr. Furtado in the Battle Mountain District has done.

Mr. LAMALFA. Thank you. My time is up on that.

I recognize Mr. Grijalva for 5 minutes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Thank you.

Sheriff Perkins, thank you for the—I guess you deputized me. Right?

Sheriff PERKINS. Well——

Mr. GRIJALVA. No. I am just kidding. Scared you for a second.

[Laughter.]

Sheriff PERKINS. You need to have 20 hours of training before I can legally do that.

Mr. GRIJALVA. And I understand, having been a county supervisor and commissioner in Pima County in Arizona, the tension that is inevitable between the Federal agencies and the county agencies and state agencies.

But I thought your point was well taken in terms of law enforcement, search and rescue, first responder activities, that there has to be a level of cooperation, memorandums of understanding, whatever is necessary to make that part of the service that is provided to the public excellent like you want it. And it requires not only good working relationships but to the point of even memorandums of understanding that have to be developed.

I say that because we had a tragedy in one of our national parks. A ranger was killed by drug runners. Very unfortunate. But what was discovered was one of the reasons was that we did not have the frequencies, the intermodal frequencies, between the communications between the county sheriffs, the state police, and the

National Park Service rangers that were also responsible for patrolling that part of it.

From that came many better understandings, intermodal communications where everybody can talk to each other. So Sheriff, for myself your point is very well taken. I think that level of cooperation, if it does not happen voluntarily, should be required in terms of that response that you have to have for the public. Thank you.

Commissioner Gerber, I was just going to ask you a question. This whole controversy that happened, did you support Bundy through that whole process?

Mr. GERBER. I did not go to it down there. I know Mr. Bundy. I know the Bundy family. Back in the 1980s, when they began eliminating all the other ranchers, Mr. Bundy was the only one that finally said, "Hey, I have had enough."

Mr. GRIJALVA. Physically. But as a Commissioner, did you—

Mr. GERBER. No.

Mr. GRIJALVA [continuing]. Because you made public comments that it was—"I truly honor his courage and desire to protect his rights"? I mention that because part of the situation in being able to work with any agency—we saw some pictures, isolated pictures, of the heavy-handedness of law enforcement under the Park Service or BLM. But there were also very graphic pictures of militia folks supporting Bundy on the highway, pointing weapons at U.S. Marshals.

That kind of a confrontation, I think, is something none of us want. And there was a court ruling that was being effectuated that he owed \$2 million worth of grazing fees. And 99 percent of all other grazing permits are paid for, and I would suggest that if that is the level of the rhetoric, then opening up the doors to BLM and having a discussion—I think both sides would be very cautious.

Mr. GERBER. And I agree with you, Congressman. It is a terrible situation. But I want to make it clear that in the 1980s, Mr. Bundy was paying the BLM, and it was not until they in effect were eliminating all of his neighbors' grazing and eliminating his grazing that he finally said, "I am not leaving." And so the history on that is not necessarily correct out there because he tried to pay, and they would not accept it.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Yes. I know. But the point is, as you said, the Founding Fathers—the point being that in their wisdom, to be three divisions of government, the judicial, who is just the important arbitrator on the law, the key arbitrator, ruled against that argument you just had.

I do not want to make this an argument about Bundy. Some people do not pay their bills. So with that, let me yield back.

Mr. GERBER. The ranchers that—could I answer that?

Mr. GRIJALVA. I yield back, but it is up to you.

Mr. LAMALFA. The gentleman may respond.

Mr. GERBER. The ranchers that I am here speaking for have always paid their grazing fees, have always done everything the BLM asked them to do, until he said, "This year you have to take all your cattle off," and they recognized it was going to destroy them. They have still followed the rule.

So the point I make is that we cannot allow the BLM to destroy the livelihoods of all these people on the whim of a BLM bureaucrat that is not even following his own rules.

Mr. LAMALFA. Thank you for finishing.

Mr. McClintock.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. It seems to me whether Mr. Bundy was right or wrong, the question occurs, was the BLM response reasonable? I think anyone who watched that unfolding fiasco can answer it was completely insane.

It seems to me that a local law enforcement agency that knew the circumstances, knew the people involved, would exercise much better judgment 9 times out of 10 than we saw out of the BLM. So I ask again, why are we arming land managers? Should that not be the responsibility of local law enforcement? Sheriff Perkins?

Sheriff PERKINS. You are absolutely right, 100 percent right. If that would have been turned over to the county, it would be done today. There would not even be an issue. We would not be talking about it.

And I have had situations with the Forest Service just recently where we did have some issues on the Forest Service with some stolen timber. And they come to me, and I helped them solve that case, and it ended up not being a big horrible thing like you have seen on TV with the Cliven Bundy thing. You are absolutely right. I agree 100 percent.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Is there anything that you can see that would advise us not to simply contract out law enforcement duties on the Federal lands to the local law enforcement agencies?

Sheriff PERKINS. Now, ask me that again? I'm sorry.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Is there any reason why we should not contract out law enforcement on Federal lands to the local law enforcement?

Sheriff PERKINS. There is every reason why you should. You are going to get better law enforcement, and it is going to be a lot cheaper.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Say that again?

Sheriff PERKINS. You are going to get better, more effective law enforcement, and it is going to be cheaper.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. I am quite sympathetic to Mr. Gerber's concern that the best way to resolve these issues is to divest surplus land that the Federal Government has done an absolutely terrible job managing.

And I have the Rim Fire area in my district, 400 square miles destroyed by forest fire because we have not thinned the forests in that region in 30 years. We have seen an 80 percent decline in timber harvests across the Federal—the National Forest lands. And in those 30 years that we have seen an 80 percent decline in the timber harvest, we have seen a concomitant and proportional increase in acreage destroyed, utterly destroyed, by forest fires.

So it is quite clear to me the Federal Government is not properly managing the vast bulk of the lands that it holds and divestment is certainly advisable. But on those lands that we do not divest, it seems to me that at least we ought to restore local control over law enforcement decisions to the agencies that are directly responsible to the people in the community.

Sheriff PERKINS. Well, I agree. And I would take that responsibility on if it was, you know, absolutely. I do it now anyway.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. LAMALFA. Thank you. Are there any other questions of our Members of the dais here? OK, we will bring in our next panel, our Panel II. But I would like to have just a quick follow-up. The gentleman from Utah please feel free to be excused. I want to ask Mr. Gerber one more thing for about 90 seconds while the other panel comes on up. So thank you, gentleman.

Mr. GERBER, we were talking about the voluntary non-use before I ran out of minutes a little bit ago. It did not sound very voluntary. That was Battle Mountain, you mentioned?

Mr. GERBER. Yes, in fact, it is all over the state but in Battle Mountain it is so egregious that when they—when Mr. Furtado goes to one of those and says, “We want you to reduce your grazing,” if they say, “No,” he gives them a 100-percent cut.

Mr. LAMALFA. Do you have that in your written testimony that you have submitted?

Mr. GERBER. Yes.

Mr. LAMALFA. OK. We would love to have any more follow-up, Chairman Bishop here, or my office as well, specifying some of this treatment.

Mr. GERBER. And most of those ranchers know that they have to deal with Mr. Furtado again next year, so they are really afraid to say anything because he will cut them further. But the six ranching families that I have been involved with on this issue this last 3 or 4 months, they got 100 percent cut so they had no fear anymore of him cutting them further. Otherwise they would not have fought.

Mr. LAMALFA. OK. Mr. Gerber, thank you again to our first panel here. Let’s please seat the second panel that had been introduced earlier by our colleague, Mr. Pearce. So we will proceed.

Here again we are going to be up against another Floor vote. They are saying approximately at 4:40, but we will stick with this panel and get through the opening round of testimony. And we will see where we are at that time.

OK, very good. Panelists, thank you for joining us here. I will go ahead and recognize for 5 minutes the Commissioner from New Mexico, Otero County, Mr. Ronny Rardin.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. RONNY RARDIN, COMMISSIONER,
OTERO COUNTY, NEW MEXICO**

Mr. RARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members. We are kind of losing our committee up there, dwindling down. But I am going to go a little different—

Mr. LAMALFA. Well, reminded, this will all be on the record and all available for the permanent record. So that makes that important, so thank you.

Mr. RARDIN. I am going to go in a little different direction. As an elected official, I have been two terms, two full terms almost. I am going on my 15th year this year, and I will finish out in 16 years as a commissioner. And what I want to say to the committee, and to Washington as a whole, is there is an old saying my dad used to teach me. He goes, “Figures do not lie, son, but liars use

figures.” And it took me a long time to figure what he really meant by that, but what he meant was we really need to stand back and look at the issues this country is facing. We can point names and say this one is a bully and this one is not.

And I have seen that change from 1992 to 2000 when I was a commissioner, the first 8 years. I took office again in 2008. And in my testimony, I tell you the first 8 years, we did not have to raise taxes ever. We worked with the BLM and things got done. And RS-2477 roads were recognized. And we really had a good working relationship.

When I came back in 2008, different faces, different names, same rules. I love FLPMA. And I think it is a great Act of Congress, but it is not being imposed properly in New Mexico, especially in Otero County and in all these other places.

And so the problem has become, in my opinion, an oversight of an elected official over the employees. And what I like to think about is if the Commission—and my Commission is only three men, actually one lady and a man, three persons, if we went down and set policy and just left and never came back, a year later we would have total chaos within our little county because we deal with the public on an everyday issue all the time.

And that is what I see going on here is I really wish the Congress would look back and see where the weak spots are. And I believe it is the oversight. I do not believe being elected you have to go back to your constituents, as I do, and convince them that you are doing a good job. And then when you are, you get re-elected. If you are not, you do not. And what I see happening is there is no oversight out there. So these agencies, they will get their feelings hurt. They will not like what we are doing or they have an agenda of their own that is not a multiple-use agenda, not a multiple serving everybody, but it serves one person.

And I will give you an example. The Agua Chiquita that was mentioned earlier by Congressman Pearce, they are keeping out 180 cattle, but they are letting 10,000 non-indigenous elk jump the fence, which causes 10 times more damage than walking into. And there are not 10,000 in that area but there are 10,000 in the whole area. So we do not know how many, 200, 500 head can come in there at night and water. They are letting them get in the same area, and saying we are managing, when they have forest fires that are the number one threat to this mouse.

And then the second threat is the animals. And they are letting the animals that can threaten destroy it, but the ones that they can manage, they are kicking out. And to me as a commissioner, it kills us because we have a very small budget. We do not say federally owned because there are really only two parcels of land that the Federal Government owns in Otero County. There is 88 percent of it which is managed by the Federal Government. But when I checked with the GSA here in Washington, they gave me a book and showed how much land the Federal Government owns. They own Holloman Air Force Base. It has been ceded to them. And they own 40,000 acres on a bombing range. The rest of it, they just manage.

It is still the proprietary right that we have over law enforcement. We do not have that problem in our county with law enforce-

ment because we know that our understanding of law enforcement is through that situation, but what I am saying is when these managing agencies come in, and they take away even 2 percent of a budget that is only 12 percent that manage a \$30 million budget a year, it hurts us dreadfully. So we have to—we have to do multiple use.

Could I hand my FLPMA down there, please, my book? I am sorry, I forgot to get that. I handed out a FLPMA book to you. And I know you all read FLPMA, and you understand FLPMA, but what I try to tell our director for the state, I give him Title 7 of FLPMA. And you have it, and it is tabbed on yours and it is even highlighted. I highlighted yours. But Title 7 of FLPMA says, the act of FLPMA, it says, “Nothing in this Act, or in any amendment made to this Act,” this is Congress made this, “shall be construed as terminating any valid lease, permit, patent, right-away or other land use or authorization existing on the date of approval of this Act.” Which we all know is 1976.

And the second—(b) says, “Nothing”—“Notwithstanding any provision of this Act, in the event of conflict with, or inconsistency between the Act, the Act of August 28, 1937, insofar as the related management of the timber resources and disposition of revenues of the lands and resources, the latter Act shall prevail.” And this is what has happened. They are not prevailing.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rardin follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RONNY RARDIN, COMMISSIONER, OTERO COUNTY,
NEW MEXICO

Chairman Hastings, Subcommittee Chairman Bishop, and members of the committee: I am an elected official at the county level and have been elected and re-elected by my constituents 10 different times with an opponent in each race. When I finish my term in 2016, I will have had the privilege of serving the public for a total of 16 years.

I remember a time when the BLM and Forest Service worked together with local officials and parties of interest to use the current laws and regulations to make Otero County and this country a better and safer place to live. Today I long for those days to come again.

Sadly I am here today to testify of what I have witnessed over the past 20 years. Instead of growing together under the current laws such as FLPMA, those laws have had the opposite effect. The Federal Government agencies (BLM, FS) have evolved into the problem we face today, instead of the solution we can turn to.

The 1976 FLPMA was passed and introduced to America and since then it has been many things to many people.

FLPMA, when followed correctly, can be a useful tool to assure local government and groups a part of management of their lands within their said county. However, let me assure you that what FLPMA has become is a tool for the agencies to use and hide behind with no oversight from any elected officials, Congress included. This has become the normal day-to-day way the bureaucracies control and devastate the local government's ability to do our job, destroy the very Customs and Cultures of the people who elect us, and in the name of “Preservation” cause total devastation. If this is not corrected soon, there will be irreversible damage to this country as a whole.

Here are two examples of what has happened in Otero County in just the past 4 years:

1. In southern Otero County, we are blessed with minerals, oil and gas, resources that have never been developed in Otero because we have always had plenty in the logging, cattle and agriculture industry.

During my first 8 years in office, (1992–2000) the Board of County Commissioners never had the need to ask one time for a tax increase.

During my second 8 years in office (2008–2016) the Board of County Commissioners has had to raise taxes twice to just maintain the services we have to the public.

Approximately 2 years ago, a company called Gulf Coast Mining came to the Commission and laid out a plan that would create 150 jobs by re-opening an existing Oro Grande mine. All they planned to do was to clean up the tailing of Oro Grande that was left over from the mining done at this site in the 1800s.

David Davidson, an owner of Gulf Coast Mining Company, has produced an 1897 grant signed by the President giving this mine, Iron Duke, a right of way to cross Territorial Property. This grant has been shown to the BLM with no resolve. BLM refuses to recognize any grant to this day.

Furthermore, the leadership of BLM, State Director Jesse Juen and the District Manager Bill Childress, as well as other employees of the agency, not only refused to allow this company access to their private property, but to this day has refused to settle with them and allow Gulf Coast to use a “DIRT” road that had existed 80 years before FLPMA became law.

BLM is currently in a lawsuit with Gulf Coast for an alleged trespass that occurred on vested private property right of way owned by both the county and the mine.

At first BLM stated that if Gulf Coast paid a \$250,000 trespass fee, then they would allow a permit to be issued to allow them to use this road. When Gulf Coast chose to challenge their decision, the BLM tried to coerce Gulf Coast by raising the trespass fine to \$750,000 if they lose.

Otero County took a bold stand and we forced the BLM to give us a permit for the road recognizing and preserving our existing vested rights. However, it wasn't until we took heavy equipment out to the road and started to fix our road that BLM decided to make a deal where Otero County could allow whoever they wanted to cross the road, but not without restriction from BLM. True to form, the first time the county went to maintain the road, BLM stopped the crew and changed the rules again.

I have some maps of the area if the committee would like to see and get a better understanding of the situation they can be supplied later.

The bullying did not stop there. There is a section of land in this area, which the road crosses also, that is managed by the State Land office. The BLM seemed to have settled down, but the State Land office refused to issue a permit for their area until Gulf Coast paid the BLM the \$750,000 in fines. BLM claims they knew nothing about this, but it fits in with what these agencies have become and what we have to deal with every day.

Had FLPMA been followed, Gulf Coast would have been exempt and we would now have 150 new high paying jobs in Otero County. Instead we have no jobs and Otero County tax payers are out thousands of dollars spent on attorneys trying to resolve an issue that should have been handled at the local level within 30 days.

2. Forest Service: the Forest Service has evolved into a machine that is totally controlled by Washington and they use the Endangered Species Act to force an “agenda” that has obviously taken an attack on the ranching community in our country.

They have ignored the voice of the local people to force on us a management scheme that has cost the people of New Mexico and this country dearly. In the name of FLPMA and ESA, they have taken away thousands of jobs, burned millions of acres, become one of the biggest contributors of pollution in our country, and killed millions of animals in forest fires, some which are on the ESA list, all the while calling this good government.

Now they are taking private water rights away from local citizens by fencing off their water and calling it conservation for wildlife. However, the FS was never given any authority to manage wildlife, and in doing so, they are going against our Constitution and the very rights this Nation has fought to protect.

Agua Chiquita is a small area in the Sacramento Mountains where ranchers have grazed since before the 1900s. This small spring, called the Barrel Springs, has served the cattle and animals for hundreds of years. There are times it runs dry and times it has plenty, and for years there has been a wire fence around it, which had gates that could be closed if need be, but have always been reopened to allow all animals to use the waters.

Recently the Forest Service went up and fenced off the area with metal pipe fence and the only animals unable to obtain any water is the cattle of the local rancher who have used this water for years and years.

Please understand that we have over 10,000 head of non-indigenous elk in the area, thousands of mule deer, bears, and feral hogs, and hundreds of species of

smaller animals who all water at places like these. The rancher in this area only has, at the most, 180 head of cattle.

Elk will easily jump 6 foot, as will deer, and the hogs can go through the fence, but the cattle are fenced out of water that rightfully belongs to the rancher according to the history and laws of this Nation.

When the elk and deer jump into this protected area, they now will destroy much more than by simply being able to walk in and walk out. The FS says they are protecting the habitat for the New Mexico jumping mouse, but this makes no sense.

Now, before the New Mexico jumping mouse was even listed, the FS was being funded by the NM Game and Fish to put this fence up, but the NM Game and Fish decided to withdraw on this issue and they pulled their funding. So the FS went out and solicited private money to build this fence and it is now a reality. The New Mexico jumping mouse was listed and the gates were shut by the FS. All of this is unconstitutional and should never have been what the FS spends their time on.

The County Commission became involved and tried to find a solution to this situation. After running into a brick wall with Travis Mosley, the local supervisor, we were invited to meet with the U.S. attorney's office.

We hoped to solve this by simply allowing the gates to open until the local rancher could go into the "protected area" and pipe their water out so both sides could be served. However, all the U.S. attorney wanted from the county was for us to go back and settle down the people and make sure the Federal Government employees were protected while they did their job. We asked if they could just open the gates for 30 days until we could get this water piped outside the fenced area and the answer was NO. Further, they also made it a point to exclude Congressman Pearce from the meeting stating that there would be no meeting if the Congressman chose to try to attend. The reason for the meeting was simple, they wanted to threaten the county and its sheriff not take action or we would be facing criminal prosecution and lawsuits for any action to allow a private citizen to access their private property.

After this I decided to break all working ties with any Federal agency. I made that in form of a motion at our regular County Commission meeting this July and only part of it passed, but my point is we have a broken system. I truly don't believe it started off that way nor was FLPMA or the ESA ever intended to do what it has done to this Nation, but it has devastated us in its present form. Unless and until we can receive proper oversight from Congress for these Federal employees that act maliciously or our citizens can be given the tools to stand up to the bullying themselves we are fighting a losing battle.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, you have the power and the duty within your elected offices to hear the citizens of this country and to take action and fix what is an obvious problem that is plaguing our Great Nation. This will certainly be the destruction of the greatest Nation on earth if you don't act now.

I pray you will take this testimony to heart and act accordingly. I look forward to working with you to resolve this and put this Nation back on track.

Thank you.

Mr. LAMALFA. We are going to go on time here.

Mr. RARDIN. I am sorry, I apologize.

Mr. LAMALFA. So we will follow-up on a later round, OK.

Alright, Mr. Blair Dunn, you are up next, please, for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF BLAIR DUNN, ATTORNEY, ALBUQUERQUE,
NEW MEXICO**

Mr. DUNN. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you. I would like to start by discussing some agreement and disagreement with what the Ranking Member started out with. This is about relationships. It is not about disagreements over policy. This is about inability of Federal employees, Federal agencies, Federal bureaucrats not following the laws.

I am going to refer back to the Agua Chiquita matter that has been in the news so much. And by way of background, I do represent Otero County, but I also represent farmers and ranchers across the state of New Mexico and in the western United States.

I also represent non-profit organizations concerned with property rights and environmental issues, such as Protect Americans Now, people like the cattle growers, who are also represented here on the panel. So this is not a singular issue. It is one that is very widespread across the western United States, affecting lots of communities and lots of individuals.

But when you look at the Agua Chiquita, one of the major things that has happened is the Forest Service even knowing what the law is in New Mexico concerning water rights ignores that. I have had previous hearings. We have had previous legal disputes with the Forest Service. They understand that in New Mexico that these water rights in question are actually what we would call pre-1907 water rights. It does not mean that they have to be on file with the state engineer's office, but they are still vested private property rights.

And the deal in the Agua Chiquita, what they got everybody so stirred up there was that the Forest Service came—despite the fact that these private property rights exist—and fenced around them.

Now, there was some discussion from Congressman Pearce about whether or not the access was reasonable. And the county felt that the access was not reasonable. I think the ranchers felt that the access was not reasonable. But at the end of the day, it was still their private property. It was still the U.S. Forest Service ignoring the laws of the State of New Mexico when it comes to water, which they are supposed to follow, and coming in and ignoring those laws in order to trample private property rights.

What we are here today is not to discuss whether or not the Endangered Species Act is proper or functioning as it should. What we are discussing is when they do not follow that, when they do not follow NEPA, what is the recourse to local governments, to private individuals when a Federal agent or Federal employee tramples their rights? That is the issue today.

And, unfortunately, when the Forest Service and other Federal agencies do not follow these laws, the effects are more far-reaching than just one instance. In a minute you are probably going to hear discussion about people picking on the Forest Service, but that is really not the case. It is a matter of when the Forest Service puts out mis-information or they mis-use the law, it tends to mis-lead other members of the public into believing that somehow it is the ranchers doing something wrong or it is the county picking on the government, Federal Government. That is not the case. These are private property rights, and the Forest Service sometimes tramples them. The BLM sometimes tramples them and takes them.

What we are looking for is a solution that would enable oversight to come from something other than just Congress. You guys have a lot of work to do, and the Federal Government is expansive and broad. We need a solution that empowers the people, empowers local governments when we have a bad apple to step in and take some action to hold them accountable. That oversight is one of the things that Congress is supposed to do, and they cede that back to the private individuals and give private individuals the ability to go to court to protect their rights or to re-gain or remedy some of what has happened to them.

There are a host of other instances that we could cite to and discuss, some of which are in my written testimony. But at the end of the day, that is what we are talking about—oversight and providing an alternative so that the public can take matters into their own hands and take it to court if need be.

I will yield now.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Dunn follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF A. BLAIR DUNN, ESQ., ATTORNEY, ALBUQUERQUE,
NEW MEXICO

Chairman Hastings, Subcommittee Chairman Bishop, and members of the committee: my name is A. Blair Dunn. I am an attorney and a fifth generation agriculturist in southern New Mexico. My family, to this day, raises cattle and horses on a ranch that includes private land, Bureau of Land Management (“BLM”) land and New Mexico State Land. My law practice focuses on assisting those involved in agriculture, natural resource use, and conservation. My family has long been involved in the legislative process and active in government. My grandfather, a long time legislative finance chairman for New Mexico, would have told you that the business of government is much like the business of tending to the apple orchard, where myself and many of my family were raised. Growing apples consists of watching out for the good and the bad, and getting rid of the bad apples so the good ones don’t spoil; government should consist of watching for the good ideas by getting rid of the bad ones, allowing the good employees to thrive while getting rid of the rotten ones that destroy the whole bushel.

This applies to what we are here today to discuss, overseeing the business of Federal agencies and their employees. One of my clients is Otero County in New Mexico. You just heard from one of their commissioners regarding the trouble that their county is subjected to as a result of those within the Federal bureaucracy that would use their power in a heavy handed or malicious way that violates civil and constitutionally guaranteed rights. Otero County has sent pleas to this very committee for congressional inquiry and oversight into what is happening in their county, and what is happening in their county is far from an isolated incident.

Otero County, like many others, is crying out for congressional oversight into the harms caused by those bad apples that misuse the power of the executive in a way that harms or interferes with private property rights. Such oversight of executive agencies is a crucial component of ensuring a well-run government. Such oversight has long been held to be an implied authority of Congress derived from the rest of the legislative functions of Congress, as delegated by the U.S. Constitution.

To say that our Federal Government is large and extensive is an understatement, and would not do justice to the state of our affairs. To that end congressional oversight into the activities of the few bad apples runs counterintuitive to reality. Without a doubt, it must be agreed that the majority of Federal employees are dedicated and hardworking individuals that are trying to do their jobs to the best of their abilities in keeping with the direction and mandates of U.S. Constitution and Federal laws. However, a well-crafted tool to assist Congress in overseeing and addressing those that would abuse their power to violate the civil and constitutional rights of the citizens of the United States is sorely missing. Some would say that such a tool does already exist, and has existed for many decades, in the form of The Civil Rights Act of 1871, which prohibits governmental employees, “acting under the color of state law,” from proximately causing the deprivation of certain constitutionally guaranteed rights. However, The Civil Rights Act of 1871 only applies to state officials.

I. BACKGROUND ON CASE HISTORY AND EFFECTS OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS ON CURRENT INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

This committee has previously heard testimony from Ms. Karen Budd-Falen. I have reviewed her testimony and the cases to which she cites. I concur with her analysis of both *Bivens v. Six Unknown Federal Narcotics Agents*, 403 U.S. 388 (1971) and its role in *Wilkie v. Robbins*, 551 U.S. 537, 577 (2007). For purposes of this testimony I will not belabor the important work of this committee by again reciting that analysis, but would respectfully offer that I incorporate her legal analysis in my testimony and adopt her legal opinion as concurring with my legal opinion.

Ms. Budd-Falen offered in her testimony that the *Robbins* case “now acts as a complete bar to the judicial branch of government, regardless of the extreme nature of the Federal officials actions,” and I would for the most part agree, certainly inas-

much as it does act as a complete bar to actions seeking to address conduct by Federal employees using the authority of their offices to violate private property rights outside of the mandates of the Fifth Amendment. But I would respectfully offer to the committee that her analysis falls short of the full effect of the decision without the subsequent action that the Court offered Congress should undertake:

We think accordingly that any damages remedy for actions by Government employees who push too hard for the Government's benefit may come better, if at all, through legislation. "Congress is in a far better position than a court to evaluate the impact of a new species of litigation" against those who act on the public's behalf. And Congress can tailor the remedy to the problem perceived, thus lessening the risk of a rising tide of suits threatening legitimate initiative on the part of Government's employees.

551 U.S. at 562. Citations omitted. Thus, instead of acting as a complete bar, such precedent now serves to embolden Federal employees to reach even further in abusing their power to violate private property rights absent oversight and legislation from Congress. An overreaching or maliciously acting employee runs little risk of retribution from their acts. Behaviors of threatening or cajoling, as you have heard about from others here testifying today, are allowed to proceed under a stronger cloak of immunity.

For example, one of my clients, El Capitan Precious Metals, Inc., a mining company in southern New Mexico that is seeking to utilize new technology to create industry and jobs in the local communities, has been subjected to threats and cajoling by the U.S. Forest Service employees. El Capitan is seeking to rework and reopen the mining claims on private property that they now own, some of which are hundreds of years old. Incidental to the claims to patented lands are vested rights of ingress and egress to their fee simple property that is surrounded by National Forest lands. Pursuant to the laws of this country, their predecessors owned a vested private property easement across forest service lands to access their private property. Now after 100 years of use on the ¾-mile road, upon which their vested easement runs, they are being told that they have no right, that they must go thru the NEPA process and they must purchase a special use permit to use the road. The road has literally been in use since 1914 and the Forest Service is telling them they must go through a lengthy and expensive NEPA process to continue use of the ¾-mile road from the highway to their mine. At one point they were threatened with charges of criminal trespass for mine employees utilizing their private property easement. They have repeatedly been cajoled to abandon their private property rights and just take a special use permit for the road. Such actions, if done by a state employee, would certainly have prompted a civil rights claim for the attempt to deprive them of their private property right. Instead, they are left seeking other less immediate remedies of pursuing Federal litigation for a taking and hopefully a short term remedy to provide them continued access to their private property, but in the mean time they run the risk of the loss of their business or even criminal prosecution for using their vested easement. I can point to other examples from clients seeking Federal grants of inspection harassed only because the Federal employee disagreed with the species of animal they intended to harvest. All of these types of actions harm not only the specific individual or companies, but also harm local rural economies and cost communities much needed jobs.

The public trust in government should be a sacred thing to Federal employees. I think that to most of them it is. But for those that would abuse the power they have been given, the public deserves an avenue to provide oversight, the public deserves a ticket to the door of the court house to seek a remedy for their damages. As has been previously cited, the *Robbins's* dissenting opinion discussed the merits of a narrowly tailored cause of action to provide and found merit to such an action:

Adopting a similar standard to Fifth Amendment retaliation claims would "lesse[n] the risk of raising a tide of suits threatening initiative on the part of Government's employees." Discrete episodes of hard bargaining that might be viewed as oppressive would not entitle a litigant to relief. But where a plaintiff could prove a pattern of severe and pervasive harassment in duration and degree well beyond the ordinary rough-and-tumble one expects in strenuous negotiations, a Bivens suit would provide a remedy. Robbins would have no trouble meeting that standard.

551 U.S. at 582. Internal citations omitted.

I can say without reservation that three of my current clients would directly fall into this category of people maliciously harmed by an abuse of power by Federal employees, and I can say with absolutely the same lack of reservation that all three

of them would never reach a point of needing to file a cause of action. I say that without reservation because I firmly believe that such options as are being discussed here by this committee would serve to deter many instances of abuse of power and would incentivize the agencies to ensure that the proper checks and balances were in place to prevent such an abuse of power.

An argument can be made that the creation of new causes of actions would cause a flood of Federal litigation, burdening the Courts and costing tax payers money. But such an argument leaves aside the fact that these causes already exist against the state employees. Further, one must give weight to the simple argument that if the harm is not occurring, then citizens will have nothing to bring a claim on.

A claim (similar to a Section 1983 claim) must include the components of a right that is possessed by a person that has suffered a deprivation of said right by an action carried out by a government employee acting under the color of the law. The deterrence policy of Section 1983 operates through the mechanism of compensation of the actual damages suffered by the victim. See *Carey v. Piphus*, 435 U.S. at 256–57 (1978); *Memphis Community School Dist. v. Stachura*, 477 U.S. 299, 307, 106 S.Ct. 2537, 2543, 91 L.Ed.2d 249 (1986) (“**deterrence is also an important purpose of this system, but it operates through the mechanism of damages that are compensatory**”) (emphasis in original). As the Supreme Court noted in *Carey*, “[t]o the extent that Congress intended that awards under § 1983 should deter the deprivation of constitutional rights, there is no evidence that it meant to establish a deterrent more formidable than that inherent in the award of compensatory damages.” 435 U.S. at 256–57. *Tinch v. City of Dayton*, 77 F.3d 483 (6th Cir. 1996) See also *Medina v. Pacheco*, 161 F.3d 18 (10th Cir. 1998) (recognizing the deterrent value of section 1983 of the Civil Rights Act).

II. PROPOSED LANGUAGE

I have also reviewed the following proposed language for a statute that could be enacted to protect private property owners from intimidating or cajoling behaviors by Federal employees acting under the color of law:

The attempted taking of private property or private property rights by means of governmental employee harassment or intimidation, under color of law, is hereby declared to be a violation of Civil Rights Act. Harassment or intimidation against the owners of private property or private property rights constitutes such violation when (1) a property owner's relinquishment of his property or property rights is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of receipt of a permit or license from a governmental agency, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by a property owner is used as the basis for the grant of or conditions included in a permit or license, or (3) the conduct of the governmental employee has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's private property or private property rights. An attempted taking of private property or property rights under this section can be composed of a series of separate acts that collectively constitutes a significant deprivation of the ownership or use of private property or property rights. In determining whether the activities of a governmental employee are actionable under this section, consideration can be given to the frequency of the discriminatory conduct, harassment or intimidation, its severity, and whether such governmental action interferes with the ownership, use or legitimate investment backed expectations of the property owner.

Such narrowly tailored language would serve as a much needed guidance post to Federal agencies. Imagine if, in considering fencing around private property water rights, threatening local governments with trespass for using vested easements, or cajoling a fifth generation agriculturist to go along with a plan or lose his grazing permits, the Federal employees also had to consider whether their desired actions and behavior resulted in liability to the government for damage to private property rights. Arguably they should already be doing so in their oaths to uphold the Constitution, but in reality some of them are not, with no fear of retribution for acting badly. I would respectfully request that the committee consider what added deliberation decisionmakers and supervisors would make when considering a proposed action or statement made to a private land owner if they must first consider the liability of violating a citizen's civil and constitutional rights. Section 1983 claims under the Civil Rights Act have been proven to encourage constitutional policing by local law enforcement officers around the country; wouldn't it make sense to encourage constitutional regulating and land managing by our Federal agencies employees?

III. THE AMOUNT OF BAD APPLES VERSUS GOOD AND GIVING THE PUBLIC THE TOOLS
TO HELP CONGRESS PROVIDE OVERSIGHT TO FEDERAL AGENCIES AND EMPLOYEES

By and large, these examples of Federal employees acting intentionally to violate the private property rights of American citizens are the exception, not the rule. But as you have heard from testimony today, and will continue hearing well into the future, should Congress fail to act to remedy this issue, the problem will continue to grow. The Federal Government is broad in size, with thousands of Federal employees; sorting through all of the employees to root out the bad apples is a task that is beyond the capabilities of Congress to do one oversight committee hearing at time. Congress should open the door of the courthouse to the everyday citizens to help shoulder the burden sorting out the bad apples and remedying the damages done by those that would abuse their power.

Mr. LAMALFA. Thank you.
Our next panelist is Mr. Jose Varela Lopez.
Five minutes, please.

**STATEMENT OF JOSE VARELA LOPEZ, NEW MEXICO CATTLE
GROWERS' ASSOCIATION, SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO**

Mr. LOPEZ. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you today. My name is Jose Varela Lopez. I live on my family ranch, southwest of Santa Fe, New Mexico. I am the 14th generation of my family to do so, and I pray daily that I will not be the last.

I am president of the New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association, the executive director of the New Mexico Forest Industry Association, immediate past president of the New Mexico Soil and Water Conservation Commission, vice chairman of the Santa Fe-Pojoaque Water Conservation District, and a former Santa Fe county commissioner.

As you know, we are here today to talk about bullying and abuse of citizens at the hand of the Federal Government. Unfortunately, this is a story that is all too familiar, ranging from the IRS scandal to the mistreatment of veterans, the failure to protect dignitaries in foreign lands, the protection of private information, the collapse of security on the Mexican border, and most recently the failure of the CDC to protect their own employees. And you can add to that the treatment of Americans by the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Army Corps of Engineers and others.

I am not here to tell you that every employee of these agencies is rogue, but I can tell you that the agencies are permeated with employees who wantonly violate the rights of the rural citizens of this country and their small businesses, entities that provide economic stability to the majority of the counties in our great Nation.

As Cattle Growers' president, we are dealing daily with individual and collective efforts to remove families like mine from the land. The worst part is that we have no recourse. New Mexico has been a hotspot not only for catastrophic wildfires resulting from lack of management by Federal agencies but also for species listings which affect natural resource users.

Endangered species protection is the biggest culprit. At the moment, the Fish and Wildlife Service is considering critical habitat for the Lesser-Prairie Chicken, the New Mexico meadow jumping

mouse and two varieties of garter snakes. Expansion of the Mexican wolf habitat is expected as early as tomorrow.

We have had 764,000 acres in New Mexico and Arizona recently designated critical habitat for the jaguar, although only a few male jaguars have been sighted in the United States over the last 60 years. We are awaiting the listings and designations for the Canadian lynx and the wolverine even though those species do not exist in our state.

But that is just half the story. New Mexico has been a hotbed for land use designations. The most recent transgression is the Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks National Monument, encompassing some 550,000 acres in the southern part of the state bordering Mexico. Add to that the recent Rio Grande del Norte National Monument of 250,000 acres and the Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area of 800,000 acres. There are also proposed designations for national monuments and wilderness expansion of 1.3 million acres.

Each of these listings and designations provide the opportunity for Federal overreach and the violation of our rights as citizens. And there is no recourse. Federal agents are literally taking the food out of the mouths of rural families and Americans as a whole. I believe my civil or constitutionally guaranteed rights are violated by a local—if I believe my civil or constitutionally guaranteed rights are violated by a local or state agent, I have the right to my day in court where a judge and a jury will have the opportunity to hear both sides of the story. If those agents have crossed the line, they are held personally liable.

Not so with Federal agents. Under current law, Federal land management employees hold the same immunity from the law as diplomats and are above any law. That is patently inequitable, can be discriminatory and violates the humanitarian ethics we strive to live by. There is no accountability for those who use the power of their employment against people like me.

A report done by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in June of 2013 documents the fact that the U.S. Forest Service employees in Regions 2 and 3 routinely violate the civil rights of allotment owners in New Mexico and Colorado. The report states that a detailed corrective action plan must be developed within 60 days of receipt of the report. As of today, to my knowledge, nothing has happened.

In closing, our government agencies are punishing natural resource users through unnecessary land use designations and restrictions prompted mainly by radical environmental groups. The preservationist mentality is making it difficult, if not impossible, for renewable resource users to make a living and is in effect extinguishing the customs and culture of our country's land-based people.

Thank you for your time and attention. We look forward to working with you to resolve these issues so our families can continue to feed ourselves and the rest of the world.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lopez follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOSE J. VARELA LOPEZ, ON BEHALF OF THE NEW MEXICO
CATTLE GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

Chairman Bishop, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you today. My name is Jose Varela Lopez. I live on my family ranch southwest of Santa Fe, New Mexico. I am the 14th generation of my family to do so and I pray daily that I will not be the last.

I am president of the New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association, the executive director of the New Mexico Forest Industry Association, the immediate past chairman of the New Mexico Soil & Water Conservation Commission, vice chairman of the Santa Fe-Pojoaque Soil & Water Conservation District and a former Santa Fe County Commissioner.

We are here today to talk about the bullying and abuse of citizens at the hands of the Federal Government. Unfortunately, this is a story that is all too familiar ranging from the IRS scandal, the mistreatment of veterans, the failure to protect dignitaries in foreign lands, the protection of private information, the collapse of security on the Mexican border, and most recently the failure of the CDC to protect their employees.

You can add to that the treatment of Americans by the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and others. I am not here to tell you that every employee of these agencies is rogue, but I can tell you that the agencies are permeated with employees that wantonly violate the rights of the rural citizens of this country and their small businesses, entities that provide economic stability to the majority of the counties in our great Nation.

As Cattle Growers' President, we are dealing daily with individual and collective efforts to remove families like mine from the land. The worst part is that we have no recourse.

New Mexico has been a hot spot not only for catastrophic wildfires resulting from the lack of management by Federal agencies but also for species listings which affect natural resource users.

Endangered species "protection" is the biggest culprit. At the moment the Fish & Wildlife Service is considering critical habitat for the lesser prairie chicken, the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse and two varieties of garter snakes. Expansion of the Mexican wolf habitat is expected as early as tomorrow. We have had 764,000 acres in New Mexico and Arizona recently designated critical habitat for the jaguar although only a few male jaguars have been sighted in the United States over the last 60 years. We are awaiting listings and designations for the Canadian lynx and the wolverine even though those species do not exist in our state.

Additionally, the Fish & Wildlife Service is taking their power to a whole new level directing their employees in Region 8 **NOT** to follow the current law, but rather to direct their resources to a program created by a secretarial order issued in December 2010. We have not yet located similar orders for the rest of the Nation, but are confident they are out there.

But that is just half the story. New Mexico has been a hot bed for special land use designations. The most recent transgression is the Organ Mountains/Desert Peaks National Monument encompassing some 550,000 acres in the southern part of the state bordering Mexico. Add that to the recent Rio Grande del Norte National Monument of 250,000 acres and the Rio Mora National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area of 800,000 acres.

There are also proposed designations for a national monument on Otero Mesa of up to a million acres, the La Bajada National Monument of about 130,000 acres, Hondo/Columbine Wilderness at 60,000 acres, Pecos Wilderness expansion of approximately 120,000 acres and the transfer of the 89,000 acre Valles Caldera National Preserve from a multiple use property to the National Park Service. Add to that existing wilderness designations and wilderness study areas of 2.8 million acres and 4.6 million acres of inventoried roadless areas, areas of critical environmental concern, special management areas and national conservation areas.

In my own case, the BLM has been buying up private lands near my family ranch within the boundaries of an Area of Critical Environmental Concern that they designated as part of their Resource Management Plan. They now refer to our ranch as an in-holding, meaning that we are now surrounded by federally managed land and ostensibly the next "willing sellers." What this designation has done is devalued our land and effectively prohibits any type of future development on the ranch that is not consistent with the BLM's Area of Critical Environmental Concern. My takings protest to their headquarters was to no avail.

Each of these listings and designations provide the opportunity for Federal overreach and the violation of our rights as citizens. And there is no recourse. Federal

agents are literally taking the food out of the mouths of rural families and Americans as a whole.

If I believe my civil or constitutionally guaranteed rights are violated by a local or state agent, I have the right to my day in court where a judge and/or a jury have the opportunity to hear both sides of the story. If those agents have crossed the line, they are held personally liable. Not so with Federal agents.

Under current law, Federal land management employees hold the same immunity from the law as diplomats, and are above any law. That is patently inequitable, can be discriminatory and violates the humanitarian ethics we strive to live by. There is no accountability for those who use the power of their employment against people like me.

A report done by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in June of 2013 documents the fact that U.S. Forest Service employees in Regions 2 and 3 routinely violate the civil rights of allotment owners in New Mexico and Colorado. The report states that a detailed Corrective Action Plan must be developed within 60 days of receipt of the report. As of today, to my knowledge, nothing has happened.

The hierarchy of the Forest Service and the BLM is such that it seems nearly impossible for there to be justice for natural resource users. In the case of the Forest Service there is no recourse. A district ranger is generally the prosecution, judge, jury and executioner. Decisions go up the chain of command, but are rarely overturned.

The BLM does provide at least some way to appeal to higher levels, but allotment owners go to those higher levels at their own peril because retaliatory action at the field level is a real and constant threat.

In closing, our Government agencies are punishing natural resource users through unnecessary land use designations and restrictions, prompted mainly by radical environmental groups. This preservationist mentality is making it difficult if not impossible for renewable resource users to make a living, and is in effect extinguishing the customs and culture of our country's land based people. Besides, how do you preserve a renewable resource?

Thank you for your time and attention. We look forward to working with you to resolve these issues so our families can continue to feed ourselves and the rest the world.

Attachments

ATTACHMENT 1

A list of all lawsuits or petitions filed by you against the federal government in the current year and the previous four years, giving the name of the lawsuit or petition, the subject matter of the lawsuit or petition, and the federal statutes under which the lawsuits or petitions were filed.

Case Name and Description	Approximate Date Filed
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Federal Court Cases

Valley Meat LLC, v. Vilsack et. al. and HSUS,

U.S. District Court NM

Civ. No. 12-cv-1083

02/13

Represent Intervenor New Mexico Cattle Growers Association et al against U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service relating to delay of a grant of inspection.

Front Range Equine Rescue et al., v. Vilsack et al.,

U.S. District Court NM

1:13-cv-00639-MCA-RHS

09/13

Represent Intervenor New Mexico Cattle Growers Association supporting U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service relating to grant of inspection.

Front Range Equine Rescue et al., v. Vilsack et al.,

10th Circuit Court of Appeals

13-2187

11/13

Represent Intervenor New Mexico Cattle Growers Association et al supporting U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service relating to grant of inspection.

WildEarth Guardians v. New Mexico State Game Commission,

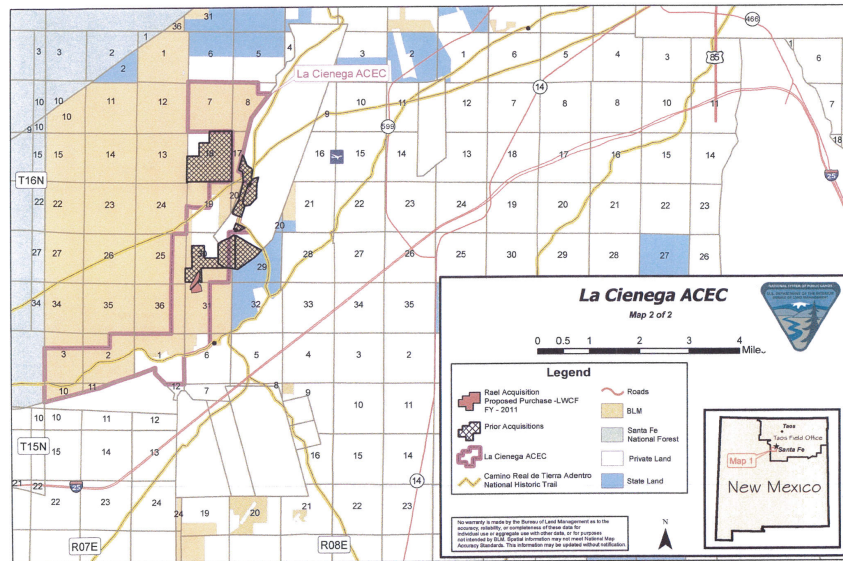
10th Circuit Court of Appeals

13-2001

02/12

Represented Intervenor New Mexico Cattle Growers Association et al supporting New Mexico Game Commission in opposing claims of "take" of Mexican wolves for allowing lawful trapping pursuant to New Mexico state law.

ATTACHMENT 2



ATTACHMENT 3



In Response Reply To:
FWS/R8/AES

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Pacific Southwest Region
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-2606
Sacramento, California 95825



MAY 20 2014

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Pacific Southwest Region
Sacramento, California

From: Assistant Regional Director, Ecological Services

Subject: Ecological Services Workload Prioritization */s/ Michael Fris*

Consecutive years of reduced funding for the Ecological Services Program have had a meaningful impact in Region 8. Workload associated with sections 4, 7, and 10 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is greater than our resources can address. To compound this problem, we anticipate the demand for ESA permitting, listing, and recovery work will increase in the coming years as the housing market improves, natural resource needs increase, and listing petitions rise. We expect this increase in workload to occur while renewable energy permitting remains a high priority for the Administration and Department of Interior. Given decreased staff resources and budgets, it behooves us to craft a strategy for prioritizing workload. Ultimately, we need a long-term strategy which may entail shifting resources throughout our region to ensure that staffing is commensurate with our priority assignments. As we for-

ulate this long-term strategy, this memorandum will guide deployment of our resources in the short term.

Regionally, our top priorities include Department of Interior initiatives, preservation of health and human safety, and workload required to meet our legal mandates. Our highest priorities also include continued implementation of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives and the surrogate species concept. Specific priorities encompass Tribal trust responsibilities, Klamath water operations projects (including the hydroelectric settlement agreement), the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan, the Bay-Delta Conservation Plan, the Central Valley Project Operations and Criteria Plan, issues of national security, projects related to flood prevention, projects related to fire risk reduction, and communicating with the public through external affairs. While these priorities comprise our regional focus, they do not provide the fine-scale sideboards to determine how offices should prioritize projects, and they do not all apply to each office within Region 8. Thus, each office will need to prioritize its own workload within their specific geographic priorities, and using surrogate species as the measure of success.

Among the remaining workload, we will focus on projects with a high conservation benefit. Whenever possible, we will place the highest priority on projects where big conservation gains can be achieved with relatively little effort through the solid work of our partners. When conservation value and programmatic priority are equal, projects will enter a queue to be addressed on a first-come, first-served basis. Streamlined, programmatic approaches (landscape scale) will be prioritized ahead of individual projects.

Action agencies and applicants can reduce permit processing time frames by producing well-prepared biological assessments and habitat conservation plans. For priority projects we cannot accomplish due to budget shortfalls, reimbursable dollars may enable us to hire temporary or term employees to work on the project from start to finish. Reimbursable dollars should only be accepted when a project would otherwise be a priority, but would go unfunded due to budget shortfalls.

Based on limited staff resources, we anticipate that we will not be able to meet regulatory time frames with some degree of frequency. This includes ESA section 7 time frames for issuing biological opinions (135 days) and time frames for issuing ESA section 4 findings (e.g., 90-day findings and 12-month findings). Finally, there are a number of items we simply won't be able to do. These items are discussed below, by Ecological Services Program.

Section 7 and Section 10

Our primary focus will continue to be Departmental and agency priorities, as well as projects where we foresee having the biggest conservation benefit. Departmental and agency priority projects include the DRECP, high-profile renewable energy projects, Klamath, BDCP, and OCAP as well as projects necessary for health and human safety or national security and those for which we have court-ordered or settlement obligations. Among section 10 projects, we will prioritize those regional HCP development efforts for which we think the applicants are committed to expeditiously completing the plan and which are most promising in terms of positive conservation outcomes. Our section 7 priorities will focus on those projects that are designed with species conservation in mind and projects where we can achieve the greatest conservation outcome for the resources expended in working on the project. We will pursue programmatic consultations if there are expected long-term conservation and workload benefits.

To focus our efforts and attention on priorities, we foresee rarely or not doing Safe Harbor Agreements, general technical assistance, and CCAAs and CCAs. We will step away from the lead role on most intra-Service consultations for non-Ecological Services programs. Those programs have been delegated the authority to complete their own section 7 consultations; we are committed to providing those programs with the tools they need to support their own determinations.

As the economic recovery continues, we anticipate that HCP and consultation workload associated with urban development will increase. We must be prepared to prioritize projects. We will not be able to complete all projects in a timely manner. Sometimes our partners have assisted with funding, which helps us complete these requests in a more timely manner (streamlined MOU with FS, agreements with Caltrans and the Corps). To enable Federal land management agencies to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, we will continue to engage these partners on fire-related consultations. We have recently reaffirmed our commitment to the Streamlined Consultation process in the Northwest Forest Plan area, and will continue to seek consensus and efficiencies in these consultations.

Listing and Recovery

Our primary (and perhaps only) focus will be on meeting court-ordered and settlement deadlines for findings, including findings for reclassifications. We will also put resources toward completing litigation-driven recovery plans, and for other recovery plans we will continue to implement our work activity guidance for FY13–FY17, ensuring that the pace of plan development is commensurate with staffing levels. Recovery implementation will be focused on critically imperiled species and will be primarily in the form of Service staff working with partners to identify and fund recovery actions.

With few exceptions, we do not plan to carry out the following activities: uplisting rules, downlisting rules, post-delisting monitoring plans, petition responses, CNORs, non-MDL findings and proposed rules, or recovery plan revisions. Five-year reviews will not be done, although abbreviated reviews may be completed if sufficient resources are available.

Contaminants

Our main priority will be maintaining spill response planning and preparedness capabilities with our field offices as well as our Federal and State partners. Another priority will be to ensure new case development and support in our Natural Resource Damage Assessment & Restoration (NRDAR) program. For restoration activities of our on-going existing NRDAR cases, implementation and support will continue as these funds are non-appropriated and derived from settlements.

With the exception of our current On-Refuge Investigation program activities, all contaminant investigation activities are no longer being implemented (unless funding/support is provided to us from our partners or stakeholders). In addition, technical assistance provided on contaminant issues to other Service Programs (i.e., Consultation, Recovery, Listing, Refuges, Fisheries, etc.) will be significantly reduced. Some technical assistance may be provided on a case-by-case basis for high-priority issues, and in such cases cost-sharing with the requesting program will be sought. Specific Service issues that will be affected include:

- Clean Water Act regulatory reviews (water quality standards, TMDLs, etc.)
- Listing support reviews (five-factor analyses, 90-day reviews, delisting, etc.)
- Mining-related NEPA reviews
- Pre-acquisition Environmental Site Assessments (Level II and Level III)
- Recovery support reviews (recovery plans, 5-year reviews, etc.)
- Refuge Pesticide Use Proposal reviews
- Refuge Cleanup reviews (EECAs, PASIs, etc.)

Conservation Planning Assistance

We will continue to focus our efforts on Departmental and agency priorities, including the Secretarial Determination for the Klamath settlement agreement, and water operations associated with the Klamath hydroelectric facilities and the Central Valley Project Improvement Act. Our field offices have been and will continue to rely on reimbursable funding from our Federal partners for work on Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act reports. It is imperative that these funds be sufficient to fully support staff, and we will prioritize projects based on the amount of funds, Departmental and agency priorities, and conservation benefit. We will continue work on FERC reviews insofar as the available funding allows, which will likely entail stepping away from involvement with some FERC projects (except Klamath).

We will not or rarely be reviewing and commenting on other agencies NEPA documents, unless we have agreed to be a Cooperating or Participating agency. Our involvement with Bald and Golden Eagle Act permitting will be minimal, and will largely depend on the priority given to individual projects.

cc: R8 All ES Project Leaders

Mr. LAMALFA. Thank you. Real quick, 14 generations, what year does that go back to?

Mr. LOPEZ. 1600, sir.

Mr. LAMALFA. Incredible. OK, thank you. Mr. Mike Lucero? OK, we are changing the order, I am sorry. We need to go to Mr. Garrett Veneklasen. Is that in the ball park, Veneklasen? Go ahead and say it your way so we will pronounce it correctly.

Mr. VENEKLASEN. It is Garrett VeneKlasen.

Mr. LAMALFA. VeneKlasen, thank you. Alright, 5 minutes, please.

STATEMENT OF GARRETT O. VENEKLASEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEW MEXICO WILDLIFE FEDERATION, SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

Mr. VENEKLASEN. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Garrett VeneKlasen. I am a native New Mexican, and I have spent my entire life hunting and fishing throughout the Southwest. Before taking my position with the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, I was the Southwest Director for Trout Unlimited, working on cold water restoration and public land protection projects, including Rio Grande del Norte and the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks designations throughout New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado.

Hunting and fishing combined contribute \$93 billion to the Nation's GDP. It is a massive industry. Like all western states, hunting and fishing in New Mexico is a thriving and rapidly growing, yet sustainable industry that enhances and greatly diversifies rural economies west-wide.

Eighty-nine percent of New Mexican sportsmen and women utilize public lands to hunt and fish. And even though we are a sparsely populated state, New Mexican sportsmen spend \$579 million, support \$258 million in salaries and wages and contribute \$58 million to state and local taxes and support 7,695 jobs annually.

It is also important to note that in New Mexico, hunting and fishing are more than just sport. They are the oldest of our core cultural land use values with a 10,000-year-old tradition. This vibrant industry and our cultural values and lifestyle are dependent upon two things: expansive, viable habitat for our fish and wildlife and large undeveloped tracts of public lands in which our rapidly growing community can recreate.

A tiny spring and its riparian area in the Lincoln National Forest known as Agua Chiquita has gotten a lot of attention lately. The Agua Chiquita offers crucial riparian habitat used by elk, which are native to the area, turkey and other wildlife for water, food and breeding. The riparian areas have been fenced with gaps for cattle for more than 20 years to mitigate livestock damage. Such cattle exclosures have been used by virtually all state and Federal land management agencies to protect critical habitat for more than 50 years west-wide.

The original barbed-wire fence around Agua Chiquita was cut so often that the Forest Service replaced it with a welded pipe rail fence. It is 4 feet high and roughly encompasses 23 acres of land. It encloses less than 23 acres of riparian habitat within a 28,000-acre grazing allotment.

It was not the Forest Service that paid for the fence. Hunters and anglers did using \$104,000 from New Mexico's Habitat Stamp Program, which is paid for with hunter and fishing license dollars, and \$11,000 from the New Mexico members of the National Wild Turkey Federation. It was a sportsmen-generated project that was designated by the Southwest Habitat Stamp Program. It was not generated by extreme environmentalists or anybody else.

Some of those who were offended by the Agua Chiquita project said water rights were being ignored or taken away, but the U.S. Forest Service told our organization that when they checked with the New Mexico agency that monitors water rights, the Office of the State Engineer, that the database showed that the only recorded water rights in that portion of Lincoln National Forest belonged to the U.S. Forest Service.

This issue of habitat protection goes far beyond the Lincoln National Forest. It extends wherever important wildlife habitat is threatened in New Mexico and other states. Stream enclosure projects offer tremendous benefit for game and non-species alike, both aquatic and terrestrial.

Outdoorsmen like me are primarily interested in trout, elk, turkey and other game, but what is good for little creatures like meadow jumping mice are also great for trout, waterfowl, upland birds and big game, for which New Mexico is known worldwide.

The discussion in New Mexico, and now in this hearing, is focused on fencing projects around critical wildlife habitat. But the discussion should broaden and acknowledge the impact of livestock grazing on our western landscapes and watersheds. Hundreds of years of grazing have transformed entire western landscapes and compromised the function of our water head. This is a fact, and it is high time that both state and Federal policymakers and land management agencies recognize this.

Grazing practices affect the fish and wildlife, but the general public has also felt the impact. Our watersheds have been degraded and they are dysfunctional. And the downstream users, municipalities and larger agricultural interests, are the ones that are really feeling the brunt of this. Our western watersheds are broken and need to be fixed.

The good news is that our watersheds are restorable and that sustainable grazing can and should continue alongside proactive habitat restoration. But as a Nation, we need to start thinking of better ways to protect and restore degraded watersheds and riparian habitat while at the same time allowing our grazing community to thrive. Sportsmen have already shown they are ready to chip in and do our share.

The Agua Chiquita incident reflects the feeling by some that Federal agencies, such as the Forest Service and BLM, have somehow overstepped their authority. They have not. They are abiding by law laid down through 200-plus years of democratic action. Sportsmen have had to learn to share our public lands and to take responsibility for protecting them. We urge others who use and profit from our Federal public lands to do the same.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. VeneKlasen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GARRETT O. VENEKLASEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
NEW MEXICO WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Chairman Rob Bishop, Ranking Member Raúl M. Grijalva, members of the committee: thank you for giving me the opportunity to present my perspective on "Threats, Intimidation and Bullying by Federal Land Managing Agencies," especially as it pertains to cattle enclosures on Federal lands in New Mexico.

My name is Garrett VeneKlasen. I am a native New Mexican and have spent my entire life hunting and fishing throughout the Southwest. Before taking my current

position as the Executive Director of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, I was the Southwest Director for Trout Unlimited, working on coldwater restoration and public land protection projects throughout New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado.

Hunting and fishing combined contribute \$93 billion to the Nation's Gross Domestic Product. Like all western states, hunting and fishing in New Mexico is a thriving and rapidly growing yet sustainable industry that enhances and greatly diversifies rural economies west wide.

Eighty-nine percent of NM sportsmen and women utilize public lands to hunt and fish. New Mexico sportsmen alone spend \$579 million, support \$258 million in salaries and wages, contribute \$58 million to state and local taxes and support 7,695 jobs annually (Outdoor Industry Association, Boulder, Colo.)

It is also important to note that in New Mexico, hunting and fishing are more than just "sport." They are the oldest of our core cultural land use values with a 10,000-year tradition.

This vibrant industry and our cultural values and lifestyle are dependent upon two things: expansive, viable habitat for our fish and wildlife and large, undeveloped tracts of public lands in which our rapidly growing community can recreate.

The tiny spring and its riparian area in Lincoln National Forest known as Agua Chiquita have gotten a lot of attention lately. A small group of ranchers claims the U.S. Forest Service is trampling their rights. They make it sound like they're the victims, but there's far more to the story.

The Agua Chiquita offers crucial riparian habitat used by elk, turkey and other wildlife for water, food and breeding. The riparian area has been fenced—with gaps for cattle—for more than 20 years to mitigate livestock damage. Such cattle enclosures have been used by virtually all state and Federal land management agencies to protect critical habitat for more than 50 years.

The original barbed-wire fence around the Agua Chiquita was cut so often that the Forest Service replaced it with a welded pipe-rail fence, 4 feet high and roughly a mile long on both sides of the stream. It encloses less than two dozen acres of riparian habitat within the 28,000-acre grazing allotment. Cattle have access to the stream through two "water lanes" built into the fence.

But it wasn't the Forest Service that paid for the fence. Hunters and anglers did, using \$104,000 from New Mexico's Habitat Stamp Program and another \$11,000 from New Mexico members of the National Wild Turkey Federation. It was sportsmen in southeast New Mexico that manifested the Agua Chiquita project and made it a top priority because riparian habitat is a precious thing in our arid state.

Some of those who were offended by the Agua Chiquita project said water rights were being ignored or taken away. But the U.S. Forest Service told our organization that when they checked with the New Mexico agency that monitors water rights, the Office of the State Engineer, the database showed that the only recorded water rights in that portion of Lincoln National Forest belonged to the U.S. Forest Service.

There were also complaints that the cattle in that grazing allotment were being denied water. But in fact, there are two places along the Agua Chiquita project where cattle can reach the stream. The Forest Service has excellent photographs if you would like to see them for yourselves.

But this issue of habitat protection goes far beyond Lincoln National Forest, however. It extends wherever important wildlife habitat is threatened, in New Mexico and other western states.

Stream enclosure projects offer tremendous benefits for game and non-game species alike, both aquatic and terrestrial. Outdoorsmen like me are primarily interested in trout, elk, turkey and other game. But what's good for tiny creatures like the meadow jumping mouse is also great for the trout, waterfowl, upland birds and big game for which New Mexico is known worldwide.

The discussion in New Mexico and now, in this hearing, has focused on fencing projects around critical wildlife habitat. But perhaps the discussion should broaden and acknowledge the impact of outdated livestock grazing practices on our western landscapes and watersheds. Hundreds of years of overgrazing has literally transformed entire western landscapes and greatly compromised the function of our watersheds. This is a fact and it's high time both state and Federal policymakers and land management agencies recognize and address this issue head on.

Grazing practices have affected fish and wildlife, but the general public has also felt the impact in many western states. Degraded watersheds—especially upland watersheds—do not properly hold and dependably deliver our precious and limited water reserves. In the end, the biggest losers are municipalities and downstream

agricultural interests who can and should be receiving more water if the upstream systems functioned as they should. The economic impacts to these water dependent economies—especially in times of extreme drought as we’re seeing in much of the West—should be carefully considered by this committee.

The good news is that our watersheds are restorable, and that sustainable grazing can and should continue alongside proactive habitat restoration. But as a Nation we need to start thinking of better ways to protect and restore degraded watersheds and riparian habitat while at the same time allowing our grazing community to thrive. Sportsmen have already shown they are ready to chip in and do our share.

It is ironic that the title of this hearing is “Threats, Intimidation and Bullying BY Federal Land Managing Agencies.” I would ask this committee to also consider “Threats, Intimidation and Bullying OF Federal Land Managing Agencies,” by certain members of the public lands grazing community as well as by select county policymakers. More than once I have witnessed county commissioners publicly verbally abuse and ridicule land managers in their meetings.

I believe the tension under discussion today boils down to one thing: communication. I suspect that if Federal land managers were treated with more respect, the public lands grazing community, county officials and the land managers could start working out their issues on a local, mutually respectful level.

The Otero County Commission’s actions and behavior certainly has not represented the best interest of their sportsmen constituents, but instead follows a flawed ideological agenda of rejecting America’s public lands legacy. It is also contrary to the best of human traits—collaboration and cooperation.

Public lands are democracy in action. They are worth fighting for. They are an American birthright that belongs equally to all citizens both born and unborn. Proximity bestows neither privilege nor special entitlements, only a heightened responsibility of localized stewardship.

But as misguided incidents like the Agua Chiquita in New Mexico, the Cliven Bundy standoff in Nevada and the ATV trespass fiasco in Utah’s Recapture Canyon show, there is a move afoot to ignore these fundamental public property rights. To some, it may not matter. To public lands sportsmen and women, it does.

The Agua Chiquita incident reflects the feeling by some that Federal agencies such as the Forest Service and the BLM have somehow “overstepped” their authority. They haven’t. They are abiding by the law laid down through 200-plus years of democratic action. Sportsmen have had to learn to share our public lands and to take responsibility for protecting them. We urge others who use and profit from our Federal public lands to do the same.

Attachment



Sportsmen save habitat protection project



It appears the habitat protection project funded by sportsmen and built around sensitive riparian habitat in Lincoln National Forest is having the intended effect. In this photo taken several months after work finished, the left side is the area open to cattle while the right side is protected for wildlife. (Photo courtesy U.S. Forest Service)

Efforts to derail work funded by hunters and anglers falls short

By Joel Gay
New Mexico Wildlife Federation

Sportsman-funded habitat projects rarely make the news, but one in Lincoln National Forest drew a surprising amount of attention this spring, including strong opposition from ranchers and others who want to remove the stream protection project for the sake of livestock.

Efforts to derail the work on Agua Chiquita, a spring-fed stream in the Sacramento Mountains south of Cloudcroft, actually started a year earlier. But New Mexico members of the National Wild Turkey Federation made it their top priority to complete the work this spring, which prompted a fresh round of complaints, threats and legal action.

"Some people have claimed this habitat protection project was 'overreach' by the U.S. Forest Service, but nothing could be further from the truth," said New Mexico Wildlife Federation Executive Director Garrett VeneKlaeren. "This was sportsmen doing what they have always done, which is working together to protect public land and habitat so that their children and grandchildren have opportunity to hunt and fish in the future."

"Hunters and anglers have had to learn to share our public lands and to take responsibility for protecting

See "Agua Chiquita," Page 12

Tierras preciadas:

Public lands are a treasure for sportsmen and women. In this Outdoor Reporter we focus on how and why hunters and anglers work so hard to protect them.

- Hunters key to protecting traditional areas near Las Cruces, Page 3
- Wilderness Act turns 50, Page 5
- Efforts to 'transfer' public land bad for all, especially sportsmen, Page 5
- Agencies work together to reopen landlocked public land, Page 7
- Streams open? Still no answer, Page 7

Gila Wilderness

A legacy for sportsmen

By M.H. "Dutch" Salmon
Special to New Mexico Wildlife Federation

When Aldo Leopold, founder of the organization that would become the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, arrived in the Southwest as a fledgling U.S. Forest Service ranger in 1909, he discovered six blocks of roadless country in the region's national forests that contained half a million acres or more.

"By the 1920s," Leopold would write later, "roads had invaded five of them and there was only one left: the headwaters of the Gila River."

Leopold, who by his own admission had "hunting fever," was the perfect scribe for the subject at hand – wilderness – with just the right mix of skilled narration, authenticity (he fished, he hunted, he camped out), poetry, polemic and foresight. In 1921 he wrote something in the *Journal of Forestry* that most Americans would never read but that professional foresters and game managers did.

By dint of his literacy, elegance and passion, Leopold would convince his peers that this far-away place in New Mexico would best serve the nation by being left "open to lawful hunting and fishing, big enough to absorb a two week's pack trip, and kept devoid of roads, artificial trails, cottages, and other works of man."

Furthermore, he continued, "a good big sample of it should be preserved. ... It is the last typical wilderness

in the southwestern mountains. Highest and best use demands its preservation."

Ninety years ago this summer, District Forester Frank Pooler responded to Leopold's assessment of "highest and best use" by designating 755,000 acres of the headwaters of the Gila River as off-limits to roads, vehicles and other works of man, yet available to hunters and anglers.

It was the nation's first protected wilderness area.

Gila has it all

The Gila now makes up just a fraction of our nation's wilderness system, which has grown to more than 100 million acres. And to this day you may stand, as I have, amidst these far-flung and peculiar mountains and ask: How can this be? How is it that in the whirl of population growth and burgeoning industry and technology, the nation has here, voluntarily, turned its back on the 21st century and returned to the 19th?

Well, it all happened right here in the Gila – the Minibretto artists, the Apaches' legacy as equine buccaners, mountain men, hound men and predator hunters, and the conservation legacy of Leopold, the most avid and articulate of sportsmen, who killed quite a few animals and saved entire landscapes. All were inspired

See "Gila," Page 4

State of the Game

Turkey tracks getting thicker all over NM

By Jim Bates
Special to New Mexico Wildlife Federation

"I think that's number 25," I said to my turkey hunting buddy Dick as we got back into my pickup and headed on down the forest road.

"Wow, this is incredible. I've never heard so many gobblers in my life!" Dick responded.

What was even more incredible was the fact that we were "putting gobblers to bed" along a main thoroughfare running through Lincoln National Forest.

Gobbling turkeys were everywhere on this eve of the start of the spring turkey season. What was particularly encouraging, though, was that this was not some isolated hotspot or wildly unusual incident. It was only a single example that wild turkeys are doing well in many locations in our state.

New Mexico has always had a fairly stable turkey population. Even in the grim years following the end of market hunting which decimated wild turkey numbers

See "Turkey," Page 10

... Agua Chiquita work finished, despite hurdles

Continued from Page 1

them," Veneklasen continued. "We urge others who use our federal public lands to do the same."

Protecting water a top priority for sportsmen

The Agua Chiquita project has been on sportsmen's radar since at least the 1990s, according to Dale Hall, the head of the Habitat Stamp Program for the Department of Game and Fish until he retired last May. For many years, hunters and anglers volunteered their time and provided funding to install and maintain a barbed wire fence meant to keep cattle out of the fragile riparian area, he said.

In an arid state, Hall added, "Those are premium habitats, and we should be protecting them."

But because livestock and wildlife kept breaching the barbed wire, the Forest Service proposed to replace the barbed wire with a pipe-rail fence. The project was to be funded by the Habitat Stamp Program. It was discussed and approved by the program's southeastern Citizens Advisory Committee more than a year ago.

Work began in the spring of 2013, using thousands of feet of pipe donated by Yates Petroleum Corp. of Artesia and \$104,000 in Habitat Stamp funds. But as word of the project spread, an Otero County Sheriff's deputy visited the site and threatened to arrest the contractor and Forest Service personnel for allegedly violating fire restrictions in place at the time.

The Forest Service had already taken fire precautions, said USFS wildlife biologist Jack Williams. The agency's fire management office had issued the contractor a waiver and fire personnel were on site. "All the necessary precautions were in place," Williams said.

Work resumed, but in May 2013 the Department of Game and Fish pulled out of the Agua Chiquita project completely. Hall said he was ordered to stop work by then-director Jim Lane.

"He called me in and wanted an explanation of what I was doing down there," Hall told NMWF. Hall said he was in the process of developing a presentation on the project when Lane pulled the plug. "I never got chance to explain it," Hall said, "because he made a political decision, not a biological decision" to kill the habitat protection work.

At that point, Game and Fish was walking away from a project that was nearly complete, according to Williams and Hall. Both the Forest Service and the Habitat Stamp program coordinator wanted to finish it after fire restrictions were lifted, but even after Lane resigned last fall – well after fire season was over – Game and Fish would not complete the job, Hall and Williams said.

Once again, sportsmen stepped up. In March of this year, New Mexico members of the National Wild Turkey Federation made the Agua Chiquita their top priority. Scott Lerich, the federation's biologist in New Mexico, said he met with the Forest Service, Hall and the fence contractor and determined that a little over \$11,000 was needed to finish the job. The Turkey Federation picked up the tab and work began again in early April, Lerich said.

This time, however, the Forest Service returned to the worksite with a fire engine and law enforcement officials. "We wanted to make sure the contractor was going to be able to complete the job," Williams said, recalling the interaction with the Otero County Sheriff's office last year. "We wanted to make sure there wasn't going to be any further interruption in the work."

Indeed, the job finished up on April 24. It consists of 4-foot-high pipe-rail fencing along both sides of the Agua Chiquita, enclosing about a mile of stream and



Sportsmen wanted to beef up the fence protecting sensitive habitat along the Agua Chiquita to keep cattle out, for obvious reasons. This photo was taken several weeks after the pipe fence was completed in April. (Photo courtesy U.S. Forest Service)

some 24 acres of riparian habitat. Cattle still have access to the stream through two "water lanes" built into the fence.

Work sets off firestorm

By the time the contractor was putting away his tools, opponents of the project had taken their complaints public. The Otero County Commission sided with local ranchers and issued a cease-and-desist order on the project. When the Forest Service received the letter, the work had already been completed.

Commissioners then asked the agency to unlock gates in the fence and allow cattle full access to the stream. When the Forest Service stood its ground, the commission ordered the county sheriff to cut the locks. According to news reports, the sheriff sought permission from a federal judge but was denied.

Coming on the heels of the standoff between the BLM and Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy, the Agua Chiquita project generated national attention. The news media reported charges of "federal overreach" and allegations that the government was ignoring the Constitution or taking private property without compensation.

Judyann Holcomb Medeiros, whose Holcomb Family Ranch was most affected by the fence-out project, was quoted by several newspapers and said, essentially, that the Forest Service was harming her business. "Fencing our cattle off of the water denies us our usage rights," she told the Alamogordo Daily News. "During the drought, our cattle have to walk extended lengths to reach water. The fences also causes the cattle to use the heavily used county road, and we have had cattle hit and killed or severely crippled or damaged by the impacts."

She did not mention the fact that her ranch will receive 15 elk tags – unit-wide – from the Department of Game and Fish this fall.

Blair Dunn, an Otero County attorney, said the Forest Service "doesn't have the right to appropriate water for wildlife," the Daily News reported. "So to pen something off for wildlife to go drink and to appropriate that water for wildlife when they don't have the necessary legal permits or rights to do so amounts to an illegal diversion of water."

Several ranchers said the Agua Chiquita project was aimed at driving them off their land, and one Otero County com-

missioner described the Forest Service's actions as "tyranny." More than 100 people gathered in Alamogordo in late May to protest the Agua Chiquita project, including John Bell, president of the Otero County Cattlemen's Association, who said, "We've got to stand up and fight back and that is what this is about."

Supporters have facts on their side

To those who followed the project closely, however, the Otero County protests missed the mark. "A grazing permit is not a right, but a permit that allows the permittee to occupy the forest but which can be revoked for any number of reasons," Sacramento District Ranger James Duran said. "Nobody lost their grazing permit over the Agua Chiquita flap," he said.

Nor did anyone lose their water rights or access to water. In fact, Duran said, "We have no documentation from the Office of the State Engineer, who we rely on for these determinations, that water rights exist or are being violated" in that portion of the Lincoln National Forest. "A lot of folks have made claims," he said, but his office searched the water rights database maintained by the state and found no evidence. "The only licensed water right is issued to the Forest Service in the database," he said. Even if a water right did exist, he said, "We have not limited livestock access to the use of the water. Since the herd was turned out into the area on May 18 cattle have had water all along."

And as to claims about the Forest Service violating local, state or federal law, Duran said no law enforcement agency has brought forth charges. "We have no intentions of breaking the law," he said. The Forest Service is, however, mandated by law to manage its forests for multiple use. That includes protecting water quality and wildlife large and small as well as providing for livestock grazing. "I don't want folks to believe the Forest Service wants to put ranching out of business," Duran said.

Lerich, the Turkey Federation biologist, said the Agua Chiquita project was needed to protect a fragile stream and riparian area, and nothing more.

"I don't have anything against cattle," he said. But cattle and elk have starkly different impacts on a water source. "Elk

will have an impact, but they'll leave. Cattle, if given a choice, will never leave – they'll stay there, and before long it's a pile of dust."

Protecting riparian habitat like the Agua Chiquita "fits into the mission of the turkey federation," he said. "It's what we do. But if we want to protect 10 or 15 acres out of the 28,000 in that grazing allotment, I think that's benefiting everybody, including the rancher. Our goal here is to provide clean water and more of it."

Public lands like Lincoln National Forest are among the many reasons the United States is exceptional in the world, said NMWF Director Veneklasen. Thanks to visionary sportsmen of the early 20th century like Theodore Roosevelt and Aldo Leopold, everyone – regardless of race, social status or bank account – has a place to hunt, fish and relax.

"Public lands are our birthright," he said. "They are worth fighting for."

But as incidents like the Agua Chiquita protests and Cliven Bundy standoff in Nevada show, there is a growing movement to treat public lands as if they were private or to transfer federal public lands to the states, and then very likely into private ownership. (See associated story on this page.)

"This is a huge threat to the sportsmen of New Mexico and throughout the West," Veneklasen said. "We can camp, hike and scout for big game freely on BLM and Forest Service land, but not on state land and certainly not on private land."

If the state seized our national forests and BLM landscapes, New Mexico taxpayers would be on the hook to fund everything from fighting forest fires to maintaining thousands of miles of roads, he continued. "It wouldn't take long before the financial demands of such management would force the state to sell, trade or lease 'our' lands. And sportsmen would lose, I guarantee."

Although some have argued that federal agencies such as the Forest Service and the BLM have somehow "overstepped" their authority, "Sportsmen know they haven't," Veneklasen said. "These agencies are abiding by the law laid down through 200-plus years of democratic action. Sportsmen have had to learn to share our public lands and to take responsibility for protecting them. Others who also use our federal public lands should do the same."

Mr. LAMALFA. Thank you.

OK, Mr. Mike Lucero, you are the closer here, so 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF MIKE LUCERO, RANCHER, JEMEZ PUEBLE,
NEW MEXICO**

Mr. LUCERO. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I appreciate your time. First off, my name is Mike Lucero. I was born and raised in New Mexico as well as my family. My family, friends and I ranch in northern New Mexico, as do many.

I am here today to inform you on some of the issues that we are having with our Federal agencies, the Forest Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

We feel that when it comes to these agencies, they take the "take it or leave it" stance with us, as they have now for many years due to the budget issues, low staffing and lack of training, to name a few. But the most recent one that I will not stand for is, "This is to avoid a lawsuit, that is why this is happening to you." By saying that, I feel that they are telling us, "This is the land of opportunity until somebody does not like what you are doing."

We have always wanted to work well with the Forest Service, and I think that our records will show that. And even now, we are respectfully disagreeing with what is going on though we are growing tired of trying to get answers and talk about compromise and being shut down because of the threat of lawsuit by a non-governmental agency.

Remember, our tax dollars are being spent to keep out cattle that have been grazing—that occurs only 45 days a year in these areas. And to my knowledge, are not the only grazing animals that use this area. And by doing so, we feel that our rights are being violated. Cattle have been grazed on this land for generations. Forgive me, my emotions, because this is dear to me, OK, for generations, long before the Forest Service took over.

The Fish and Wildlife talk about ecosystems. How long does something have to be in place for it to become part of the ecosystem? Is 100 years not part of that? And how does it change the ecosystem by changing what is going on now and what has been for over 100 years?

Somehow I feel that they have not done their studies and found an effective way to spend this money that has somehow been set aside for New Mexico jumping mouse habitat.

Now, we have been asking for compromise. We have been wanting to work out alternatives to what is going on up there. The ranchers there are tired of asking questions and never getting answers. Every time we have a question, there is always a thread of "if you question what is going on, you are going to lose your permits."

The majority of these men that are ranching in these areas are elderly. This is their sole source of income. And these agencies need to realize that when this—when people come to this table, and they sit across from the Forest Service or the Fish and Wildlife and they ask and answer, they expect the respect that we give them when we do our daily job up there and manage the way we have been for 100 years. The problem is we do not get answers ever. And if we question more than we are supposed to, we are always threatened.

Now, I sit before you today to let you know what is going on up there. And I hope that we can come to some kind of agreement on what needs to be done and move forward with it because enough is enough when it comes to bullying people that have been on this land for generations. Remember, this was a land grant before the Forest Service took it over. And my family ultimately has been the stewards of this land for as long as they have. And the reason we are in the situation we are now with poor watershed and wildfires is mismanagement by the people that are taking care of it now, the Federal agencies.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lucero follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL LUCERO, JEMEZ PUEBLE, NEW MEXICO

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to tell you what is going on in New Mexico at the hands of the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

My name is Michael Lucero, I was born and raised in New Mexico. I am an allotment owner in the Santa Fe National Forest, as is my father. I currently serve on two boards; the Jemez Valley School Board of Education and the Union Board at work.

My family and I ranch on the Santa Fe National Forest, and have for many generations. My great grandfather started off on foot with 1,000 head of sheep when the Forest Service was not even in existence. This was then passed down to my grandparents, then to my father.

Our allotment originally started as the San Diego Land Grant which eventually was taken by the government and became Forest Service land. Land grants were issued to settlers by the king of Spain when the land was part of Mexico. The land was taken from us to create the bureaucracy in place today. Now that government is driving us completely from the land.

We feel that the government has taken away and are still trying to take away what is rightfully ours, from our grazing rights to our water rights. It seems that every year it gets more difficult to continue with our way of life and keep our heritage alive as the government is continually putting obstacles in our path.

My mother's family was driven out of the logging business when the Spotted Owl became an endangered species. They left the valley that they grew up in to find work elsewhere.

Since the drought took over New Mexico, the Forest Service has used the "drought" to reduce our herd numbers. We always did as we were asked and cut our herds. Even though we cut our numbers for a particular year, we still paid the full payment due for the permit. When we looked at the drought maps and the formula they were using with the Forest Service, we were able to prove to them that their formula was incorrect. We were then allowed to come in with full numbers for our herds. Now that that issue has been resolved, here we are again with another issue, an endangered species threatening to shut us down.

Two years ago in 2011, our range conservationist gave us a handout which talked about the New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse. In that meeting he stated that if it was listed, that it would be the end of grazing on Forest Service Lands.

This mouse hibernates about 9 months a year and requires a 24-inch stubble height of dense grass. If we were not already providing the appropriate conditions, how can the mouse be there?

Another puzzling fact is that the mouse can apparently detect property lines. The proposed critical habitat goes right to the fence line to the Valles Caldera National Preserve and stops.

That was all we heard on the issue until the fall of 2013. The comment period in the Federal Register would open and the Forest Service told us how important it was to comment. That being said we did make comments when the notice was posted in the Federal Register. We then were called into another meeting with the Forest Service where they told us that they had no control over what was going happen if it was listed.

The local ranchers had many questions about the New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse, like where it was found. How many were found? What would be done to protect it and where it would be done? The Forest Service had no answers about the mouse. They told us that the Fish & Wildlife Service made all those decisions.

We then asked the Forest Service to call a meeting with the Forest Service and the Fish & Wildlife Service. In that meeting the Fish & Wildlife Service told us that the listing of the mouse would not affect grazing and that the Fish & Wildlife Service had not told the Forest Service to put up fences of any kind; we were told that all the Fish & Wildlife Service does is list the species.

The Forest Service was present at this meeting. Eric Hines from the Fish & Wildlife Service told us that we would still have our opportunity to be involved in a Section 7 consultation. We asked the Forest Service about that and they had no clue what we were talking about. All this being said we have been in the dark since day one.

The science used to list the mouse is disputable. Why are there no lists of areas that were studied? And if there is a list, why was it not provided to us when we asked for it? In the meeting with the Forest Service, they stated that the only reason for the fence was to avoid being sued by the WildEarth Guardians.

Why is the Forest Service making these decisions that will affect the local economy, the ranching industry and the culture, and well being of rural communities? It appears that they are not taking into account the local comments on these issues based on a lawsuit by a non-governmental party.

Since when is America not a democratic country? Why is the Federal Government not giving every citizen its due process on issues that affect so many different aspects of their lives? In every meeting with the Forest Service, they are always telling us that we are closer to NO RANCHING ON FOREST SERVICE LANDS! When we asked how we can work out a compromise with the Forest Service on issues like this, the Forest Service personnel always answer, "It's not me, I was told that this is the way the upper staff wants it."

I personally asked about alternatives fencing us off water and then out of our pastures but always hit road blocks, such as, no money or more studies needed. But somehow there is now money to build fences? At about \$20 per linear foot, where did the money come from and why now, when we have been asking for alternatives for the past year. The expense of putting up this fence does not make sense since we only graze our cattle 2 months out of the year in these areas.

We were told in the meeting with the Forest Service and Fish & Wildlife Service that nothing would be done without first the NEPA process and a meeting with all of the ranchers and the Forest Service to come up with a plan together. Next thing we hear is that they are going to put up an 8-foot fence spanning 117 acres to keep animals and humans out of the critical habitat for the mouse. That is just my allotment. There are 10 others who are being similarly affected. Seems that we skipped a couple of steps and their words are just empty promises. Moving forward like this is a clear picture of GOVERNMENT BULLYING. They tell us one thing and do the opposite. They are never truthful with us and we are living in constant fear of what comes next.

After the media got involved around the 4th of July camping season, the Forest Service changed their tune. They are now proposing a 5-foot fence covering the same area that may impact dispersed camping. Why are we told about an 8-foot fence and 2 weeks later it becomes a 5-foot fence? Why are humans and wildlife, particularly elk, not harmful to the mouse?

The money being used to erect these fences is from taxpayers. That being said, it appears that the Forest Service is using my tax dollars to fence my family and numerous other families OUT OF BUSINESS! Tell me how that makes sense? Why would our concerns and comments not be heard, when we have been using these lands since it was our ancestors Land Grant?

Every time that there are compromises to be made, it is always us, the ranchers, who have to compromise on our end. We are told that if we do not compromise and agree with the decisions being made by the Forest Service that we risk losing our grazing allotments.

How are we supposed to work with the Forest Service when we all know that they do not listen to our concerns? We want to work with the Forest Service for the benefit of us all. It is in our best interest to take care of the land and help manage it properly. If we were not managing properly, then how is it that my family has been in business for over 100 years? It's because we love the land and our tradition and hope to pass it down for many generations to come.

I feel that Agriculture is very important to America, if you've seen the price of beef in the grocery stores lately, the more they cut herds the higher the price goes up for all American People.

I don't get how the environmental groups work with the Federal Government; what gives them so much power that they dictate what the Federal Government does with other people that use government lands? If you look at the WildEarth Guardians Web site, it states exactly what the U.S. Forest Service is going to do.

They want to protect one endangered species and do everything in their power to get it done, they don't take into consideration that land management is so important for example: the Spotted Owl that was listed years ago. Many people (most of my family) from the logging industry lost their jobs which caused them to move out of the area to find work.

Through the years, now from the lack of managing the land correctly the Santa Fe National Forest is overgrown and we have had several forest fires with so much fuel they are out of control and the American Tax Payers spend so much more money on these forest fires than they would have if the land was managed properly. People would still have jobs. The Spotted Owl would not have a burned forest and not only that species, but all the other listed species on the Endangered Species List. In the ecosystem how do you protect one species and throw it off for the other endangered species?

Fencing off the river would dramatically affect our culture, economy, and our local community. Our local community businesses thrive on the business generated by ranchers, campers, fishermen, hunters and hikers. If we fence off all of the proposed rivers, it would have a detrimental effect on these local businesses.

I don't understand how people from other states get jobs at these Federal agencies that don't understand the way you manage a ranch in New Mexico. The way we manage a ranch in northern New Mexico is completely different than you would manage a ranch in a place like Wyoming or Montana.

The ranchers in this area don't have a lot of money; there are not a lot of big cattle operations like everyone thinks there are. I bought my own cattle and allotments and I bought it for a reason. It was an investment to put my two kids through college and so I could have something to hand over to my children that they have known their whole lives. My father inherited his small operation from my grandpa, which helps pay for my elderly grandmother's care: medical insurance, daily caretaker, and anything she may need. Because of these cows, grandma is not in a state paid or Federal paid nursing home. This is how we take care of her, it's how our community works; this is a part of what we do as a ranching family and community.

It saddens me to sit in a meeting where the head Forest Ranger (Linda Riddle) is telling us "I could care less if they got rid of all the cows on the Forest, that would make my job that much easier."

This statement coming from a Federal Government employee! Robert Trujillo, Deputy Director of the USFS stated in a local newspaper that he feels that the forest is overgrazed, however if the USFS was to pull the allotment management records, it would show that this is and never has been the case. The areas used by the ranchers are NOT OVERGRAZED! We have never been in violation of the Federal regulations governing ranching.

The opposite is true for the Forest Service personnel because they are not following the Federal regulation that says they are to protect the heritage and culture of ranching families that are allotment owners on the USFS. The Federal regulation states that they are to always get input from the allotment owners when making decisions that would affect them.

Rumors are floating in our communities that the Forest Service is planning to use eminent domain to obtain private land that is within what is believed to be jumping mouse areas. We cannot document them, but this is the fear we are living under.

The government and environmental groups are making it almost impossible for us to do what we love (our culture/heritage). In my opinion cattlemen are the caretakers of the land, if it wasn't for cattle grazing these lands we wouldn't have an environment for a jumping mouse or most other creatures. We are the ones who manage the lands and wildlife also benefit from our watering systems.

The media has accurately shown how our land looks. This is how we have taken care of this land, a part of our culture is an understanding that you have to take care of the land, in order for the land to take care of you.

We are trying to do the right thing, but what we see for doing the right thing is we better go along with this or you are going to lose your permits! Ultimately the government is losing its caretaker, because that's what we do.

Thank you for your time. We pray that you can help us.

Timeline on New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse

- February 27, 2014—Official meeting about the NMNJM, the Forest Service told us they were going to start the NEPA process
- March 4, 2014—The Forest Service told us NO NEPA; Forest Service talked about the fence and taking 300 feet on each side of the river

- March 28, 2014—Forest Service sent letter on mouse fencing
- April 2, 2014—We called a meeting with the Forest Service to ask questions
- April 8, 2014—Meeting with the Forest Service; we looked at other options, but no money
- April 9, 2014—Meeting in El Rito NM with Cal Joyner; NO ANSWERS
- April 25, 2014—Meeting with the Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service
- May 9, 2014—Forest Service sends letter retracting the March 28, 2014 letter
- June 25, 2014—Meeting with the Forest Service; they showed us a map of fencing areas and they told us about categorical exclusion
- July 2, 2014—Forest Service and Fish & Wildlife canceled meeting
- July 10, 2014—Received comment notices from Forest Service

Mr. LAMALFA. I want to thank you, Mr. Lucero. OK, we are still doing OK on time. Let's move to our first round of questions here. I will recognize myself for up to 5 minutes here.

Let me come back to you, Mr. Lucero. In your dealings, you felt that decisions are made by Federal managers not because maybe it is the best practice or the most neighborly one but a fear of lawsuits by other outside sources. Could you dwell on that a little bit, please?

Mr. LUCERO. Exactly. We have asked—we have asked them, OK, “What is the alternative to putting a fence up that excludes cattle out of these riparian areas?” And they said, “If we do not put this up, we are going to be sued.”

Mr. LAMALFA. By who?

Mr. LUCERO. By the WildEarth Guardians. And with their permission, I videotaped the meeting because I knew this was going in this direction. And for years, it has been. And I am fed up with it. So if anybody wants to question what was said by them, I have it on videotape.

Mr. LAMALFA. You should put that on YouTube then.

Mr. LUCERO. Yeah, I guess.

Mr. LAMALFA. It would be easily accessible.

Mr. LUCERO. But, yes, their answer is, “The reason we are doing this is because we are going to be sued.” As a Federal agency, that is not how you manage what is going on in this forest.

Mr. LAMALFA. It is all too prevalent over a lot of the West where decisions are made by various entities, and I have run across it too.

In my part of the state, there is becoming a larger and larger elk problem in northern California where people are looking for remedies, and they are not getting them. They are told, “Hey, put up a fence, keep the elk out.” Well, an elk is a very powerful animal. And so putting aside the idea of the expense of the fence or you having to change your operation for something that perhaps should be managed, how effective do you see fencing as far as just affecting an elk population and preventing elk grazing, for example?

Mr. LUCERO. The fence they originally proposed was 8-feet high, and it would exclude elk, cattle, hunting, fishing, hiking, everything. The Fourth of July weekend went by, and for some reason they came back to us with a letter. And I provided the letter to you guys. They came back to us with a letter, and now they are proposing a 5-foot high fence that would just exclude cattle. Now, tell me that makes sense when we are talking about 45 days worth of cattle grazing versus 365 days of elk grazing.

Mr. LAMALFA. So the fences are not preventing over-grazing, it sounds like?

Mr. LUCERO. No. And to go back to the over-grazing, the term has been thrown around loosely. And I provided some pictures here. And if I could point to these pictures real quick, I would like to. This is in a drought. This is the actual meadow that we are talking about. This is in a drought before the rain started, and we have already grazed that pasture. And this is over-grazing to them.

Mr. LAMALFA. This is post-grazing?

Mr. LUCERO. Yes. Also, I would like to add the fact that if we have over-grazed it, why have they never told us we have?

Mr. LAMALFA. OK, thank you. I go to Mr. Dunn. What recommendations do you have to allow individuals to seek recourse for the abuses by some of these employees? Have you—

Mr. DUNN. Mr. Chair, yes, I have. There is some proposed language that was part of my written testimony. One alternative is to make that an addition to the Civil Rights Act and essentially create a cause of action similar to a Section 1983 civil rights claim. As you are probably aware, Section 1983 claims can be brought against state and local authorities that exceed the law and harm somebody's individual rights. But that is not a remedy that is available to private citizens against Federal employees.

One way to gain some accountability would be to make that kind of a cause to action available. And I honestly believe that it would act as a deterrent. I think if there was some accountability, and the Forest Service, the BLM had to think about the fact that their actions might cause liability, they might take a little bit more care in not abusing the law.

Mr. LAMALFA. OK, thank you. I am going to come back on the second round. I will yield now and recognize Mr. Grijalva, our Ranking Member.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Yes, thank you very much. Mr. Lucero, I want to thank you for your testimony. What are the disadvantages of not having the agencies that we are talking about here today is they cannot respond to some of the points that you make. And I think they need to be responded to. It is my understanding that nothing has been finalized because we asked about that, in particular up in northern New Mexico. I asked your Congressman about that, and the Forest Service said nothing had been finalized. Leaving that aside, but it would have been good to get a direct answer,—

Mr. LUCERO. Can I speak on that real quick?

Mr. GRIJALVA. Let me finish my question, Mr. Lucero, and then you can—

Mr. LUCERO. OK.

Mr. GRIJALVA [continuing]. Wrap it up. Breaks in the fence that would allow cattle to be able to go into those 23 acres, is it?

Mr. LUCERO. This is a completely different area—

Mr. GRIJALVA. OK.

Mr. LUCERO [continuing]. That you are talking about.

Mr. GRIJALVA. That is the other one?

Mr. LUCERO. Yes.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Breaks in there so they could go—cattle could have access, the pumping of water even if it is necessary, those were two points that I think I had also heard in a letter that I re-

ceived from one of your colleagues, one of the ranchers up there. And those are questions we are going to pursue with the Forest Service because there is no way to get an answer right now. You have your point of view and your opinion and what you taped. And I do not deny that, but I want to hear from the agency as to how they are working with and what mitigating steps they are making to try to draw something cooperative with the ranchers in the area because I think that is the important way to go.

I know you will be advised that litigation is the only way to fly, but if this can be worked out cooperatively, I think it would be to the best benefits of everybody.

So we will pursue with the agency the points that you brought up because I think they deserve answers. And I certainly want those answers as much as you do.

Mr. LUCERO. OK. I think I kind of gave you what you are asking for. Categorical exclusion is what they told us they are using on this, which does not give us our option for a NEPA or an environmental assessment. We have asked for that in an official letter.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Well, see, that is the point. The agency being here, I would have asked those questions of the agencies.

Mr. LUCERO. Yes, well, I provided you the paperwork so you have it in front of you.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Well, I would still need to the talk to the agency, Mr. Lucero,—

Mr. LUCERO. Yes, sir.

Mr. GRIJALVA [continuing]. And get that point of view. Thank you. I was going to ask Mr. Dunn, the argument that I have heard you make is that the Federal grazing permits are, if I am not mistaken, a form of private property or should be recognized by the Federal Government?

Mr. DUNN. Ranking Member, I was actually discussing water rights. I had not talked about whether or not grazing rights were private property.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Is it in the written testimony? Well, I thought it was in your written testimony as well as we read it. Is it?

Mr. DUNN. I believe all I discussed at this point was private water rights.

Mr. GRIJALVA. But is it in your written testimony or is it not?

Mr. DUNN. I do not believe it is, sir.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Well, then that question is moot then if it is not in there, but if it is, we will get back to that question, OK? Because I think I am not the constitutional scholar that you appear to be, but I do have a constitutional question.

Mr. DUNN. OK.

Mr. GRIJALVA. The other point is, Mr. VeneKlasen, in the first panel, we heard about transferring all the Federal public lands to the states. We also heard a little bit about let the local communities be the decisionmakers and the state just pays the—and the Federal Government just pays the bills. But all the policy decisions are going to be made by the state. What does that mean for the sportsmen you represent?

Mr. VENEKLASEN. Well, I mean it sounds good on paper but it is sort of a gilded—

Mr. GRIJALVA. Lily?

Mr. VENEKLASEN. It is gilded. One of our biggest concerns is we have had some catastrophic wildfires in New Mexico, the cost of which are in excess of \$150 million. There is no way on earth the state could even begin to pay for fighting a catastrophic wildfire, for example.

We have a 100,000-acre thinning project in the Jemez Mountains right now. The Federal Government has donated \$80 million to thin that 100,000 acres of forest.

And so the idea of state management sounds good on paper, but what we would also see is in our state, for example, you cannot camp on state land. And the lands are regulated in a very different way. So, you know, the idea of the state managing lands is a—it is a pipe dream is what it is.

Mr. GRIJALVA. And the states charge a much higher grazing fee than the Federal Government and for other uses?

Mr. VENEKLASEN. The average AMU in New Mexico on private land is \$13, and the Federal lands, it is a \$1.34. And so, you know, those are big things that would impact the grazing community.

Mr. GRIJALVA. But state land does not have the constitutional issues that have been raised today as to—

Mr. VENEKLASEN. No. And one of the other concerns we have is the thing we like about Federal management is there is a standard that is followed across the board that will make sure that these lands and the habitat are—

Mr. GRIJALVA. And I agree. I think the point that Mr. Lucero brought up about northern New Mexico that I am not real familiar with, but I got real lucky and married a young lady from Penasco, so I know—I got very lucky, is there is unique historical, there is unique cultural issues that while there is a general standard, sometimes those nuances have to be part of the decisionmaking. I think that in particular in northern New Mexico, that might be the case. In some of the other areas, I do not think they have that nuance.

Anyway, I yield back.

Mr. LAMALFA. Alright, thank you. Mr. Tipton, 5 minutes, please.

Mr. TIPTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, by the way, Mr. Lopez, that looks like a great field to graze in from the one you have got up there, a lot of feed.

But I would like to start with Mr. Lopez. We have a real issue it seems. The Federal Government keeps trying to acquire more land. And I found it incredibly curious when we have had the Forest Service before us, even the BLM, they do not have the resources to currently manage the lands they have, but are now acquiring more land. Now, they have been acquiring land near your homestead, is that correct?

Mr. LOPEZ. Mr. Chairman and Mr. Tipton, that is correct. In my written testimony, I provided you with a map that was attached there. And basically the BLM has been purchasing small tracts of lands that were parts of old ranches that were around me until the point that I am considered an in-holding.

Mr. TIPTON. Yes.

Mr. LOPEZ. Which they gleefully tell me that I am an in-holding. And to me that means that I am going to be the next willing seller because I am completely surrounded by Federal land now.

Mr. TIPTON. Now, what type of notice did you receive, Mr. Lopez, in regards to the acquisition of that land? Did the BLM notify you that they were making those acquisitions?

Mr. LOPEZ. Mr. Chairman and Mr. Tipton, they did not notify me. It is my understanding in talking to them recently that normally they do not notify the adjoining landowners because when they make agreements with certain nonprofits, like Trust for Public Land and others, it is usually a hush-hush deal. They do not want anybody to know what they are doing. And so when I found out about all these things was after the fact.

Mr. TIPTON. But the fact of the matter is that may have been an economic decision on the BLM's part to be able to get the land at a lower price. But how has that impacted your land price now that you are now labeled as an in-holding?

Mr. LOPEZ. Well, apart from being an in-holding, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Tipton, I also happen to be in what the BLM created a few years ago called an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The BLM tells me that I am not in that area, although I am surrounded by the area. But since I am not Federal land, it does not impact me. The problem is that it actually does impact me because if I went to use any of my mineral rights or anything else or do any development on my property being inside that zone, I would have a very difficult time getting anything through the county because they recognize the Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

Mr. TIPTON. So effectively this had a negative impact in terms of your holdings, ability to be able to re-sell the property. Do you not believe that adjacent landowners at a very minimum should at least be notified of these acquisitions because of the potential challenges that you are describing?

Mr. LOPEZ. Mr. Chairman and Mr. Tipton, I certainly do. And it would have been nice if they had advised me because now that they have purchased all this land, I have a lot of trespass issues on the property because my property is in between two pieces of BLM land. And so I get trespassed all the time. If I had known about this before this happened, we could have come to some agreement in doing a land exchange or something like that that would have benefited both of us.

Mr. TIPTON. You know, I just introduced some legislation, it was H.R. 5074, the Land Adjacency Notification Disclosure Act, which would actually require that you be notified. Would that be of benefit to you?

Mr. LOPEZ. Mr. Chairman and Mr. Tipton, that certainly would be of benefit, maybe not in my case now but for many others, it certainly would be.

Mr. TIPTON. I thank you for your time and for being here and certainly understand some of the challenges that you are facing.

Mr. Dunn, I would like to be able to visit with you for just a moment if we may in regards to the company that you represent. In their vested private property easement across these Forest Service lands that they have had for 100 years, were they notified that it no longer existed and is now subject to a lengthy NEPA analysis?

Mr. DUNN. Yes, they have been.

Mr. TIPTON. OK. And was the company ever consulted or afforded any opportunity to be able to respond to the Forest Service in regards to these actions?

Mr. DUNN. They did. They had discussions with the Forest Service. They were in negotiations with the Forest Service. Ultimately, what the Forest Service said was, we will issue you a special use permit for that road you have already—well, that they believe that they already hold a vested right to, but we do not recognize, the Forest Service does not recognize vested private property right easements across our ground. So therefore without a special use permit, you have nothing.

Mr. TIPTON. Even with that ability to be able to have that easement, is this effectively a taking?

Mr. DUNN. Yes, it is. One of the things I did disclose is that that is what the company is considering is—and has filed a takings litigation on that basis.

Mr. TIPTON. Right, and no compensation was offered. The Federal Government took it?

Mr. DUNN. No, they just wanted them to give up their easement.

Mr. TIPTON. This puts the company in kind of a difficult position of take it or leave it really, doesn't it, with the Federal Government?

Mr. DUNN. Absolutely. The "take it or leave it" attitude, not only are they potentially losing their right, but they are trying to start a company and reopen a mine, bring people to work, startup, get community—get the community involved, get going. And without that certainty that that road is going to continue to be there, and that they will continue to be able to access that, you are talking about a publicly-traded company that might lose millions of dollars when they get shut down by the Forest Service over a 3/4-mile section of road.

Mr. TIPTON. Thank you. I am out of time, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. LAMALFA. Thank you, Mr. Tipton. Votes are up. We have a little time I think for one additional round. Would you like an additional round, Mr. Tipton? OK, alright. Thank you.

I would follow up with one for Mr. VeneKlasen. I was curious, again, you had in your statement that fencing off the particular creek was done in order to protect a trout habitat. According to the Watershed Protection Section of the New Mexico Environmental Department, the only trout present in that stream at that time were brook trout, which are native to the East Coast, and rainbow trout, native to the Northwest. So what is the logic in cutting off access to protect non-native fish as well as non-native elk and even feral pigs that are non-native to that area? It seems that that is an overreach.

Mr. VENEKLASEN. Mr. Chairman, regardless of the species of trout that exists in the particular watershed, and I think we are talking about the Sequoia River because Agua Chiquita does not have trout in it. The trout do have a great deal of economic value because people come and fish for those fish, not only people that live in the area but a lot of out-of-state people come and fish there.

Mr. LAMALFA. But you are using basically environmental law to cut people off with longstanding generational access to that for

someone else's economic benefit. It almost sounds like an imminent domain taking in a way.

Mr. VENEKLASEN. I don't think you are taking away—if we are talking about the Sequoia instance, we are talking about 101,000-acre grazing allotment.

Mr. LAMALFA. I was talking about the Agua Chiquita.

Mr. VENEKLASEN. Agua Chiquita does not have trout in it.

Mr. DUNN. Mr. Chairman?

Mr. LAMALFA. Yes, sir.

Mr. DUNN. I might be able to add to that. Part of why the Agua Chiquita fencing originally started back in the mid-1990s was because there was a hatchery in that area at that point. That hatchery has long since gone away in the last 10 years. It is no longer there. So the reason that Sikes money was used, and I believe a lot of the—we will call it the environmental money was used on those projects was originally because there was a fish hatchery in that area. Since that time, it has gone away. And now they have without going through the NEPA process converted this to mouse habitat. And this riparian area is now about mouse habitat even though they have never actually gone through the NEPA process to study the effects of making it mouse habitat.

Mr. LAMALFA. Good. OK, thank you for the clarification. We have run across this again where we have non-native species that all of a sudden become protected species where they are introduced by other means, mankind, et cetera.

Mr. Lucero, you look like you would like to add to that?

Mr. LUCERO. Yes, I would like to add the fact that Mr.—I'm sorry?

Mr. VENEKLASEN. VeneKlasen.

Mr. LUCERO. VeneKlasen stated that it is only 127 acres out of this allotment. I get that. I have a 2,800-square foot house. My kitchen sink where I drink my water is very small but without that, how am I supposed to use my home?

Mr. LAMALFA. Because that is the water source?

Mr. LUCERO. Yes, sir.

Mr. LAMALFA. Yes, sir. OK. Alright, one final one. Mr. Dunn, I was intrigued by something you were talking about earlier as a type of a civil rights action for people in dealing with their Federal Government there, especially western landowners and those that regulate them. Would you expand upon that a little bit?

Mr. DUNN. Mr. Chairman, I believe an expansion of that would be that while a cause of action already exists against state employees that would harm your property rights, what we are talking about is expanding that to Federal employees that would use the color of authority to infringe upon a person's constitutional and civil rights, namely, to interfere with their constitutionally guaranteed property rights.

For instance, the mining company that I described in my written testimony, where the Forest Service came in and threatened and cajoled them to give up their vested property rights easement and used the color of law to do so, if this language were adopted, it would enable that company to bring a Section 1983 claim in effect against the Forest Service where they have used their authority improperly.

Mr. LAMALFA. Interesting. I am interested in that concept.

So at this point, there are no other further questions from the committee. I would like to thank all of you for your travel, for your patience as we come back and forth from votes, and we have them up right now. So much appreciated that you would take your time and come speak with us and inform us here.

So for those members of the subcommittee that may have additional questions in reviewing this or their staff, we would ask to submit those questions. And then we could ask you to respond to those in writing at a later date.

The hearing record will be open for 10 days to receive those responses. So if there is no further business, as we are lonely here now, without objection, the subcommittee will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:15 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

[ADDITIONAL MATERIALS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DREW O. PARKIN, ESCALANTE, UTAH, REGARDING A NOVEMBER 2009 INCIDENT AT THE CIRCLER CLIFFS, GARFIELD COUNTY, WITHIN THE GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE NATIONAL MONUMENT

My name is Drew O. Parkin. I am a resident of Escalante, Utah. I am a natural resource policy analyst and planner with 40 years of professional experience in 30 states spanning from Maine to Hawaii. In 2009, I was Assistant Manager for the BLM's Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and field station manager for the northern portion of the National Monument, including all of the monument in Garfield County, Utah. In this capacity I had responsibility for overseeing management of field-level management on the northern half of the monument including recreation, wildlife, range, and road management. At the monument I reported to a monument-wide manager named Rene Berkhoudt.

I did not have authority over law enforcement, as that element is managed through a stove-pipe operation where a state-level BLM law enforcement officer directly oversees field-level law enforcement officers (LEOs). However, I did have authority over all of the activities for which an LEO could issue a citation or make an arrest, and for identifying the priorities for LEO involvement within the Escalante Field Station area. Jeffrey Lauersdorf was the LEO assigned to the Escalante Field Station.

In 2009 my office had arranged for the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) to hold a special elk hunt in an area called the Circle Cliffs in eastern Garfield County, some 50 miles east of Escalante. We requested the hunt on the advice of the Monument's wildlife biologist to decrease grazing pressure by elk on a large area that had recently been reseeded by the BLM. To participate in the hunt, hunters had to draw a permit. There was high interest in the hunt due to the reputation of the area as a high quality hunting area.

At 4:30 p.m. on November 6, 2009—the day prior to the start of the hunt—I received a telephone call from a DWR manager in Wayne County, Utah. He was concerned because his staff had visited the site of the impending hunt and discovered that carsonite posts with official “no motor vehicles” posters on them had been placed on several spur roads and undeveloped camping areas, allegedly by “someone from the BLM.” I informed him that I had no knowledge of this and committed to investigate. Immediately after I terminated the call I received another call, this one from the Garfield County Engineer, who called with the same concern. He called after hearing complaints from county residents who were planning to participate in the hunt. He was particularly concerned given the county's assertion of RS 2477 rights to several roads in the area in the Circle Cliff area. Again, I promised to investigate. I immediately drove to the area in question. I drove a government-licensed truck and wore an official BLM uniform. When I arrived at the Circle Cliffs I confirmed the accuracy of the DFW and county telephone calls. Most of the side roads were blocked by newly installed carsonite “no motor vehicle” signs. Also signed were many areas historically used as undeveloped vehicle-accessed campsites.

I was also approached by several prospective hunters camped near the main road concerned that they could not access their usual and accustomed hunting and camp-

ing areas. They confirmed that the signs had been placed by a uniformed LEO from the BLM. From their descriptions I concluded that the LEO was Jeff Lauersdorf, an LEO out of the Escalante Field Office, who had a history of rouge enforcement actions, principally aimed at hunters, ranchers, and ATV enthusiasts.

In preparation for this hunt I had given no thought to closing either roads or camping areas. Mr. Lauersdorf had not consulted with me concerning his plan to close roads, and law enforcement officers have no authority to unilaterally close roads. That is a management decision, and I was the field-level management authority for the Circle Cliffs area. At no time did I ask Mr. Lauersdorf to engage with the Circle Cliffs hunt. In fact I had asked staff, including Mr. Lauersdorf, to leave management of the hunt to DWR, as it was their responsibility.

Given the situation I concluded that leaving the road and camping area closure signs in place would be extremely disruptive to the next day's hunt. It was also illegal, and I already knew that both DWR and Garfield County were very concerned. It was now past 6 p.m. and, as this was early November, nighttime was fast approaching. As it would have been impractical to obtain assistance at this time of day I proceeded to remove the signs, which I did by wrapping a chain around the sign, hooking the other end of the chain to my vehicle's trailer hitch, and pulling the signs using my vehicle. I did not count the number of signs that I pulled, but it was certainly over 20. By the time I had finished it was dark and past 10 p.m.

At a location near the Lamp Stand, a prominent rock outcropping at the northeast end of the Circle Cliffs where I had pulled the last sign, I saw headlights coming toward me from the south. I assumed it was a hunter coming to set up camp. When the vehicle reached my location I saw that it was Mr. Lauersdorf, driving his BLM vehicle and wearing his uniform. He stopped his truck abruptly and walked directly to me. He looking in the bed of my truck, saw the signs, and angrily challenged my decision to remove the signs. I informed him of my reason and of the fact that signs are not to be placed in the Escalante Field Station area without my permission. Without comment he proceeded to transfer the signs from my truck to his. I did not intercede as I was aware that (1) we were miles away from the closest person, (2) he was agitated, (3) he was armed with at least three firearms and a knife, and (4) he had a history of impulsive and irrational behavior. In short, I was concerned for my safety. After transferring the signs he came up to me, placed his hand around the handle of his holstered pistol, and, at very close distance, told me the he "was arresting me for destruction of government property."

Fearing for my safety, I pointed my finger at him and told him to back off. He backed up a step or two. I bolted for my vehicle, jumped in, and proceeded to leave by driving through the sage brush to the nearest unimproved road. He followed me, with both of us moving at fairly high speed for this type of road. He followed me for less than a mile and then stopped.

I returned the next morning to observe how the hunt was proceeding. I stopped at the larger camps. I was informed that a BLM LEO had visited the camps earlier in the morning, and that the officer had asked occupants for their hunting and driver's licenses. They questioned why a BLM officer was asking for this information. I met one hunter who informed me that earlier that morning he had been driving his UTV down a Circle Cliffs secondary road and was pulled over by Mr. Lauersdorf, who proceeded to ask for his licenses. After the hunt I spoke with a gentleman from Kanab. The gentleman, who was a disabled hunter participating in the hunt, had been pulled off the road by Mr. Lauersdorf on the morning in question. He told me that the officer had shocked him with his abrupt manner of approach and, as a result, the hunter pulled his vehicle off of the roadway and onto the adjacent sage brush. Mr. Lauersdorf proceeded to threaten to give a ticket for driving off of the road. Mr. Lauersdorf then asked for his hunting permit. After reading it Mr. Lauersdorf told the man that his permit did not cover this hunt and ordered him to leave. He was informed that if he left he would not receive the ticket for being off road. The man left and, after the fact, was informed by DWR that his permit was, in fact valid for this hunt. I was particularly concerned with this situation as the man was disabled, and had gone to considerable effort to participate in the hunt.

The next Monday morning I informed the monument manager, Rene Berkhoudt, of the weekend's events. Concerning the placement of signs, Berkhoudt suggested that he had not spoken to Mr. Lauersdorf before the hunt and had no knowledge of the plan to sign the roads and camping areas. Concerning Mr. Lauersdorf's threat to arrest me, Berkhoudt said, and I quote, "Jeff sometimes gets excited. I will have a talk with him." I was never informed that such a talk took place.

This is a true depiction of the events that took place, to the best of my knowledge. I am quite certain of the date of Friday, November 6 but do not have records to

verify the date. It may have been Friday, November 13. I know that it was a Friday evening in early November 2009.

STATE OF UTAH,
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR,
JULY 17, 2014.

Hon. ROB BISHOP, *Chairman,*
House Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation,
1324 Longworth House Office Building,
Washington, DC 20515.

DEAR CHAIRMAN BISHOP:

Thank you for convening a committee hearing of the Public Lands and Environmental Regulation Subcommittee to consider issues related to Bureau of Land Management (BLM) law enforcement activities within the State of Utah. Before addressing our concerns, let me state that we enjoy a very positive and productive relationship with the BLM State Director Juan Palma. He has been consistently attentive to matters that interest the state and swift to respond to requests for meetings, phone conferences, or information. We are fortunate to have him at the helm of the agency that manages more than half of Utah's land. Unfortunately, I cannot extend the same compliments to BLM law enforcement operations in Utah that, regrettably, do not fall under Director Palma's supervision.

To give you some background, I came to my position as Lieutenant Governor after having served as Sanpete County commissioner and as an elected representative in the Utah Legislature. I have deep roots in our rural culture; and am proud of the integrity and self-reliance of our local elected officials. Over the past several years, I have heard an increasingly loud chorus of voices expressing concerns on the intrusion of Federal law enforcement officers into matters that fall clearly within the jurisdiction of our county sheriffs and a lack of cooperation in those areas which traditionally have involved common Federal-local concerns. Examples include the issuance of traffic violations on county roads both on and off the BLM lands and confrontation and intimidation of local residents accusing them of minor civil infractions of BLM protocols.

Another matter of concern is how the BLM law enforcement handled the arrest and charges relating to possession of Indian artifacts allegedly taken from BLM lands in southwestern Utah. The BLM law enforcement executed that operation in an unnecessarily aggressive manner. It was an "invasion" of a small town involving an unusually large number of officers. The SWAT team approach to non-violent crimes reflected the arrogance and insensitivity of the law enforcement team involved.

The BLM approach at the Bundy Ranch, in which Utah's BLM Agent in Charge was heavily involved, further demonstrates a lack of judgment. The near disaster at the ranch was brought on by the massive BLM response to a situation involving unlawful grazing and failure to pay fines and fees. This could have been avoided by a reasoned, balanced approach. Yet, overkill seems to be the default response of Utah's BLM Agent in Charge.

Another very troublesome issue is cooperative law enforcement contracts with our county sheriffs. The Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) states that the Secretary shall contract with local law enforcement to the greatest extent possible for law enforcement services on public lands. Historically, BLM has delegated law enforcement authority to county sheriff departments to enforce state and local BLM's laws on Federal lands. Such contracts are in place on Forest Service (FS) lands in Utah. Yet, recently, these same contracts have been difficult and in some cases impossible to negotiate due to resistance from the BLM Utah Law Enforcement Chief.

In March of this year, I convened a group of county commissioners, sheriffs, legislators, and the law enforcement agents in charge for both the BLM and the FS to discuss these issues and seek resolution. At that time, we explained our concerns and constructively discussed them concluding with a "next steps" proposal. The BLM Agent in Charge stated that he did not approve contracts out of a concern for lack of "deliverables." He agreed to give us a written description of what he meant by deliverables and provide additional documentation explaining his refusal to renew these contracts. Regrettably, he has not provided the requested information, nor have we seen improvement in the attitudes and performance of Federal law enforcement officers working in the state.

I am hopeful that as you consider our concerns in the course of the hearing, the BLM will respond appropriately to ensure that Utah enjoys the same productive partnership with the Federal law enforcement operations within the state that we have with the BLM State Office.

Respectfully,

SPENCER J. COX,
Lieutenant Governor.

STATE OF UTAH,
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL,
JULY 23, 2014.

Hon. ROB BISHOP, *Chairman,*
House Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation,
Washington, DC 20515.

DEAR CHAIRMAN BISHOP:

I appreciate your convening a committee hearing of the Public Lands and Environmental Regulation Subcommittee regarding law enforcement activities by the Bureau of Land Management ("BLM") within the State of Utah. I have read the letter dated July 17, 2014 submitted by Utah Lieutenant Governor Spencer J. Cox to you. I agree with the both the content and concern expressed by the Lieutenant Governor and incorporate by reference much of what he communicated.

I, too, would underscore the fact that Utah has had a long and often productive relationship with the BLM over decades and that the current approach and implementation of policies under the BLM State Director, Juan Palma, has been both positive and productive. Just recently, on his own initiative, Mr. Palma took me and a member of my staff on an in-depth tour of his office to increase working relationships and understanding between his office and mine. It was educational and helped build further trust between a Federal and state agency. Also, one of the past national directors of the BLM, Kathleen Clarke, is from Utah and works closely with our office daily in her role as head of Utah's Public Lands Office.

In contrast to the relationship with Director Palma and former Director Clark, the level of trust and respect for law enforcement under the BLM, seems marginal at best throughout my state. Like our Lt. Governor, I have heard consistent and repeated concerns from the ranks of well-respected and reasonable county commissioners, county attorneys and sheriffs, among others, from counties across my state, regarding what they perceive to be strong-arm tactics, overstepping of authority and attitudes dismissive of county interests by the BLM.

I understand the difficulties facing the Agent in Charge ("AIC") of law enforcement in Utah. As a fellow law enforcement executive, I manage a state agency with hundreds of employees, including dozens of investigators/peace officers. I understand the complexity and many competing interests at play in making every policy decision. I am loath to judge any other executive without knowing all of the considerations facing that leader. Moreover, the AIC has also demonstrated professionalism in our limited personal interactions and been cordial and responsive to me. Nevertheless, I can judge the effect of his decisions on those in my state and, in this case, his decisions have created a void of trust from too many in Utah.

While I have expressed to him my absolute belief, that despite political or personal differences, law enforcement officers at the Federal, state, county and city level need total solidarity in the field (a philosophy to which I continue to hold strongly), the lack of trust toward the BLM law enforcement arm has deteriorated to such a degree, that I am afraid investigators, agents or other law enforcement from his agency, the Utah Attorney General's Office and other law enforcement agencies are not as safe or effective as they could be in multi-agency situations or cases due to such strained relationships.

I hope this perspective provides some assistance to the committee as it hears testimony and deliberates in this matter.

Respectfully,

SEAN D. REYES,
Utah Attorney General.

MOHAVE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS,
LAKE HAVASU CITY, AZ,
JULY 29, 2014.

Hon. ROB BISHOP, *Chairman,*
House Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation,
Washington, DC 20515.

DEAR CHAIRMAN BISHOP:

My name is Buster Johnson and I have been a Supervisor for Mohave County, AZ for 17+ years. I am also retired from Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Over the years, I have had a mostly good working relationship with BLM enforcement officers in both jobs. This year is the first time that I have had to question as to how Mohave County will work with BLM officers. It has nothing to do with the officers themselves; it is the leadership in BLM.

The Bundy incident in Nevada, which borders our county, caused us great concern due to the handling of the situation. I believe we saw the incident escalated to a dangerous level by BLM leadership or lack thereof. We teach our local law enforcement people to defuse situations which may arise, not to throw gas on the fire.

The Federal Government is, from time to time, inexplicably guilty of bullying and in the process of serving arrest warrants on some involved in the Bundy incident which we believe will once again flame the fires of discontent. Clearly, Mr. Bundy needs to pay his grazing fees, and I believe the BLM was within their legal right to try to collect grazing fee arrearages. However, no one in their right mind would design and carry out such a heavy handed, ham-boned raid which sets a bad precedent and places the safety people living near public lands in jeopardy. I agree with the pending arrests but believe the issuing of a summons would work better to keep the possible violence to a minimum. Waiting until after the first of 2015 might also help. Mohave County signs an agreement to allow the feds to enforce Arizona state law in our county. To date that agreement has not been signed due to our concerns over BLM's use of its police powers.

I wish to express my empathy for other counties across the Nation trying to work with BLM law enforcement officials—it is crucial that we work this out and the sooner the better.

Sincerely,

BUSTER D. JOHNSON,
Mohave County Supervisor,
District III.

CUSTER BATTLEFIELD MUSEUM,
GARRYOWEN, MONTANA,
JULY 22, 2014.

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Christopher Kortlander. I own and operate the historic town of Garryowen, Montana, the only town inside the perimeter of the Custer Battlefield. I am also the founding director of the Custer Battlefield Museum in Garryowen.

In 2005 a small army of Federal law enforcement agents descended on Garryowen with drawn fully automatic machine guns. Federal agents pointed guns at Garryowen employees and museum interns while executing a search warrant that was obtained by deceit and the twisting of truth.

This 'raid' was conducted as a military style assault on a domestic terrorist cell. The Federal agents had not received any information stating that the target(s) of their assault were in any way violent. In addition, there were a number of civilians/tourists present who were also put in harm's way during this raid at Garryowen, which was and remains a historic site and popular tourist destination, as well as a state-recognized informational center, housing a U.S. post office, a gas station, convenience store, museum, Subway sandwich shop and a retail trading post selling souvenirs.

For 8 hours, the BLM agents conducting the 'raid' at Garryowen, continually threatened me with never again seeing my special needs son, stating that I was facing decades in a Federal prison. BLM Federal law enforcement agents verbally harassed me, accusing me of being a baby killer, a swindler and a con man, and asserting that I was going to be charged with nine Federal felonies.

After a day terrorizing all the civilians they encountered, and for the following 4-plus years, they continued to threaten me through the U.S. Attorney's office, and retained seized property that was unassociated with any crime whatsoever. I was forced to expend hundreds of thousands of dollars and nearly every waking moment, as well as countless sleepless nights, dealing with the legal threats thrown at me, evidently because I needed to be rolled over to advance an agenda that benefited only the BLM and the Federal agents involved.

When the U.S. Attorney announced that there would be no charges filed against me, I sued the 24 Federal agents involved in prosecuting me, and found that I could not legally engage them because of the quasi-immunity that protects Federal law enforcement agents and prevents them from being held accountable for any wrongs they may commit. These men and women who had persecuted me in the 2005 raid—and those who came to conduct another raid in 2008—were beyond my reach and the reach of any non-agency review. They remained free to harass and attack me and others without any personal accountability or responsibility for their actions. The quasi-immunity enjoyed by BLM and Federal Fish and Wildlife law enforcement agents means that they are not accountable to me, the American public, the U.S. Court system, or the U.S. Congress. They are untouchables, protected no matter what they do.

Following the end of the investigation and the numerous threats of prosecution made against me, I received—anonously—a 52-page document which stated that the BLM raids on Garryowen, Gibson Guitar, and the Four Corners incident in Blanding, Utah, were all connected to the same agency and at least one Federal special agent who were on a mission to enhance their personal status and increase BLM funding from Congress. The actions of the law enforcement agents in the paramilitary raids on Garryowen, the *Operation CERBERUS* Action in Blanding, Utah, and the Gibson Guitar raids served only the political purposes of the BLM.

At Garryowen, Federal machine guns were pointed at the head of a museum intern who had been forced to the ground spread eagle—not for a pat down consistent with the safety of the abusive law enforcement agents, but rather as a show of force to intimidate and threaten this uninvolved young citizen into fearfully accepting the government's 'might makes right' posture.

I was victimized as a criminal although I have no criminal history. I was denied constitutional protections because these apparently do not attach until charges are filed. The same Federal agents who executed search warrants pursued a fruitless investigation that served only to make me appear to be a criminal to family, friends, colleagues, and business associates, in the process destroying my personal reputation, my businesses and business relationships, together with other opportunities that I had spent more than a decade developing.

Despite my obvious efforts to cooperate with the Federal agents involved, during the raid I was accused of being a baby killer, and had my private residence (which was NOT on the search warrant) forced open, entered, and searched. Hundreds of artifacts—personal and private—together with tens of thousands of pages of documentation and other assets were seized, all of which were outside the scope of the search warrant used by the BLM.

No items listed on the search warrant—four buttons and a suspender belt buckle—were taken. After more than 8 hours of scaring and intimidating me, my employees, and volunteer staff, this arrogant assembly of Federal agents departed. My business and philanthropic endeavors were laid to waste and I was left financially destroyed. All that was missing was Federal charges, but despite seizing a mountain of so-called evidence, no charges were ever filed.

What had happened to me can only be described as a non-judicial prosecution, or more correctly, an extra-judicial persecution by BLM Federal agents. Federal charges were threatened for the next several years, but charges were never filed, and nearly 5 years after the 'raid' the U.S. Attorney indicated that the investigation was completed and that NO charges were to be filed against me. Despite that fact, it is unreasonable to say that I had not been abusively prosecuted by the Federal agency involved.

The BLM retained hundreds of artifacts until their so-called investigation had been completed nearly 5 years later, and they continued to hold dozens more after that time, initially alleging that these artifacts were absolute contraband and unlawful to be possessed even by a museum, and later insisting that the artifacts were derivative contraband based upon the manner in which they had been obtained or retained by me and the museum with which I am associated. A Federal claim for the return of these items was filed and just this winter (2014) all of the items sought were finally returned to the Custer Battlefield Museum in Garryowen, MT.

Seized documents had been previously returned, but thrown about in such a manner that it is impossible to restore the organization that existed at the time the

BLM agents carted them away. It is impossible for me to even know if what was returned is in fact ALL of the documentation that was seized. I have been unable to find a number of museum documents I know that I possessed prior to the BLM raid.

It is important to note, once again, that no charges of criminal activity of any sort were ever filed in this matter. That action would have moved the matter into Federal court where constitutional protections against the actions of Federal law enforcement agents and the Federal agency they support would have arisen. However, without Federal court supervision, the “800 pound gorilla” that is the autonomous Federal agent, cloaked with the power and authority of the U.S. Government, remains free to use unrestrained, military-level tactics and weaponry and the threat of force to crush citizens—frequently guilty of nothing—and in the process, destroy the businesses and lives of their victims with impunity.

These Federal agents do not appear to answer to anyone other than possibly their peers—those also in agency law enforcement. Their methods are secret, their endeavors blacked out when pursued through Freedom of Information requests, and protected by judicial quasi-immunity granted to any Federal law enforcement agent from the prying eyes of their victims, the press, and apparently the people’s representatives in Congress. Even though the Supreme Court recognized the right of the citizen to hold the workers of the Federal Government personally accountable for their actions, the hurdle for a victim to get into court is generally impossible with ill-defined rules and standards, especially regarding Federal law enforcement agents.

I remain fearful today—not because I am guilty of any criminal activity—but because the unrestrained power of Federal law enforcement agencies to use force and intimidation to strike fear into the hearts and lives of law-abiding citizens remains in place, allowing these reckless agents and agencies to destroy lives and livelihoods and seize personal possessions without reason or accountability to the citizens of these United States or to the letter and spirit of the laws that regulate their activities.

It is time for the U.S. Congress to reign in this self-serving agency that uses Federal paramilitary force to further its own agenda, and believes itself to be beyond reproach or accountability. Thank you for your consideration and concern regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

CHRISTOPHER KORTLANDER,
Founding Director.

[LIST OF DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD RETAINED IN THE
COMMITTEE’S OFFICIAL FILES]

Correspondence dated March 28, 2014 and May 9, 2014 from Jacob S. Lubera, District Ranger, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Santa Fe National Forest, Jemez Ranger District to Friends and Neighbors regarding a proposed riparian improvement project along the upper Rio Cebolla where it crosses Forest Road 376.

Correspondence dated July 9, 2014 from Allan R. Setzer, District Ranger, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Santa Fe National Forest, Cuba Ranger District to Friends and Neighbors regarding a proposed project along the upper Rio Cebolla where it crosses Forest Road 376.