

SOUTHWEST FOREST HEALTH AND WILDFIRE
PREVENTION ACT OF 2003

NOVEMBER 21, 2003.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the
State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. POMBO, from the Committee on Resources,
submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H.R. 2696]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Resources, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 2696) to establish Institutes to demonstrate and promote the use of adaptive ecosystem management to reduce the risk of wildfires, and restore the health of fire-adapted forest and woodland ecosystems of the interior West, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with an amendment and recommend that the bill as amended do pass.

The amendment is as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2003”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that—

(1) there is an increasing threat of wildfire to millions of acres of forest land and rangeland throughout the United States;

(2) forest land and rangeland are degraded as a direct consequence of land management practices (including practices to control and prevent wildfires and the failure to harvest subdominant trees from overstocked stands that disrupt the occurrence of frequent low-intensity fires that have periodically removed flammable undergrowth;

(3) at least 39,000,000 acres of land of the National Forest System in the interior West are at high risk of wildfire;

(4) an average of 95 percent of the expenditures by the Forest Service for wildfire suppression during fiscal years 1990 through 1994 were made to suppress wildfires in the interior West;

(5) the number, size, and severity of wildfires in the interior West are increasing;

(6) of the timberland in National Forests in the States of Arizona and New Mexico, 59 percent of such land in Arizona, and 56 percent of such land in New Mexico, has an average diameter of 9 to 12 inches diameter at breast height;

(7) the population of the interior West grew twice as fast as the national average during the 1990s;

(8) efforts to prioritize forests and communities for wildfire risk reduction have been inconsistent and insufficient and have resulted in funding to areas that are not prone to severe wildfires;

(9) catastrophic wildfires—

(A) endanger homes and communities;

(B) damage and destroy watersheds and soils; and

(C) pose a serious threat to the habitat of threatened and endangered species;

(10) a 1994 assessment of forest health in the interior West estimated that only a 15- to 30-year window of opportunity exists for effective management intervention before damage from uncontrollable wildfire becomes widespread, with 8 years having already elapsed since the assessment:

(11) following a catastrophic wildfire, degraded forests in the interior West that have lost their resilience may not return to their former grandeur;

(12) healthy forest and woodland ecosystems—

(A) reduce the risk of wildfire to forests and communities;

(B) improve wildlife habitat and biodiversity;

(C) increase tree, grass, forb, and shrub productivity;

(D) enhance watershed values;

(E) improve the environment; and

(F) provide a basis in some areas for economically and environmentally sustainable uses;

(13) sustaining the long-term ecological and economic health of interior West forests and woodland, and their associated human communities requires preventing severe wildfires before the wildfires occur and permitting natural, low-intensity ground fires;

(14) more natural fire regimes cannot be accomplished without the reduction of excess fuels and thinning of subdominant trees. (which fuels and trees may be of commercial value);

(15) ecologically-based forest and woodland ecosystem restoration on a landscape scale will—

(A) improve long-term community protection;

(B) minimize the need for wildfire suppression;

(C) improve resource values;

(D) improve the ecological integrity and resilience of these systems;

(E) reduce rehabilitation costs;

(F) reduce loss of critical habitat; and

(G) protect forests for future generations;

(16) although the National Fire Plan, and the report entitled “Protecting People and Sustaining Resources in Fire-Adapted Ecosystems-A Cohesive Strategy” (65 Fed. Reg. 67480), advocated a shift in wildfire policy from suppression to prevention (including restoration and hazardous fuels reduction), Federal land managers are not dedicating sufficient attention and financial resources to restoration activities that simultaneously restore forest health and reduce the risk of severe wildfire;

(17) although landscape scale restoration is needed to effectively reverse degradation, scientific understanding of landscape scale treatments is limited;

(18) the Federal wildfire research program is funded at approximately 1/3 of the amount that is required to address emerging wildfire problems, resulting in the lack of a cohesive strategy to address the threat of catastrophic wildfires; and

(19) rigorous, objective, understandable, and applied scientific information is needed for—

(A) the design, implementation, monitoring and adaptation of landscape scale restoration treatments and improvement of wildfire management technology;

(B) the environmental review process; and

(C) affected entities that collaborate in the development and implementation of wildfire treatment.

SEC. 3. PURPOSES.

The purposes of this Act are—

(1) to enhance the capacity to develop, transfer, apply, and monitor, and regularly update practical science-based forest restoration treatments that will re-

duce the risk of severe wildfires, and improve the health of dry forest and woodland ecosystems in the interior West;

(2) to synthesize and adapt scientific findings from conventional research programs to the implementation of forest and woodland restoration on a landscape scale;

(3) to facilitate the transfer of interdisciplinary knowledge required to understand the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of wildfire on ecosystems and landscapes;

(4) to require the institutes established under this Act to collaborate with Federal agencies—

(A) to use ecological restoration treatments to reverse declining forest health and reduce the risk of severe wildfires across the forest landscape;

(B) to ensure that sufficient funds are dedicated to wildfire prevention activities, especially restoration treatments; and

(C) to design, implement, monitor and regularly revise wildfire treatments based on the use of adaptive ecosystem management;

(5) to assist land managers in—

(A) treating acres with restoration-based applications; and

(B) using new management technologies (including the transfer of understandable information, assistance with environmental review, and field and classroom training and collaboration) to accomplish the goals identified in—

(i) the National Fire Plan;

(ii) the report entitled “Protecting People and Sustaining Resources in Fire-Adapted Ecosystems-A Cohesive Strategy” (65 Fed. Reg. 67480); and

(iii) the report entitled “10-Year Comprehensive Strategy: A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment” of the Western Governors’ Association;

(6) to provide technical assistance to collaborative efforts by affected entities to develop, implement, and monitor adaptive ecosystem management restoration treatments that are ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially responsible; and

(7) to assist Federal and non-Federal land managers in providing information to the public on the role of fire and fire management in dry forest and woodland ecosystems in the interior West.

SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) ADAPTIVE ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT.—The term “adaptive ecosystem management” means a natural resource management process under which planning, implementation, monitoring, research, evaluation, and incorporation of new knowledge are combined into a management approach that is—

(A) based on scientific findings and the needs of society;

(B) treats management actions as experiments;

(C) acknowledges the complexity of these systems and scientific uncertainty; and

(D) uses the resulting new knowledge to modify future management methods and policy.

(2) AFFECTED ENTITIES.—The term “affected entities” includes—

(A) land managers;

(B) stakeholders;

(C) concerned citizens; and

(D) the States of the interior West, including political subdivisions of the States.

(3) DRY FOREST AND WOODLAND ECOSYSTEM.—The term “dry forest and woodland ecosystem” means an ecosystem that is dominated by ponderosa pines and associated dry forest and woodland types.

(4) INSTITUTE.—The term “Institute” means an Institute established under section 5(a).

(5) INTERIOR WEST.—The term “interior West” means the States of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

(6) LAND MANAGER.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term “land manager” means a person or entity that practices or guides natural resource management.

(B) INCLUSIONS.—The term “land manager” includes a Federal, State, local, or tribal land management agency.

(7) RESTORATION.—The term “restoration” means a process undertaken to return an ecosystem or habitat toward—

(A) the original structure of the ecosystem or habitat; or

- (B) a condition that supports a natural complement of species, natural function, or ecological process (such as a low intensity fire).
- (8) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service.
- (9) SECRETARIES.—The term “Secretaries” means—
 - (A) the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service; and
 - (B) the Secretary of the Interior.
- (10) STAKEHOLDER.—The term “stakeholder” means any person interested in or affected by management of forest or woodland ecosystems.
- (11) SUBDOMINANT TREES.—Are trees that occur underneath the canopy or extend into the canopy but are smaller and less vigorous than dominant trees.
- (12) OVERSTOCKED STANDS.—Where the number of trees per acre exceeds the natural carrying capacity of the site.
- (13) RESILIENCE.—The ability of a system to absorb disturbance without being pushed into a different, possibly less desirable stable state.

SEC. 5. ESTABLISHMENT OF INSTITUTES.

- (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, shall—
 - (1) not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, establish 3 Institutes to promote the use of adaptive ecosystem management to reduce the risk of wildfires, and restore the health of forest and woodland ecosystems, in the interior West; and
 - (2) provide assistance to the Institutes to promote the use of collaborative processes and adaptive ecosystem management in accordance with paragraph (1).
- (b) LOCATION.—
 - (1) EXISTING INSTITUTES.—The Secretary may designate an institute in existence on the date of enactment of this Act to serve as an Institute established under this Act.
 - (2) STATES.—Of the Institutes established under this Act, the Secretary shall establish 1 Institute in each of—
 - (A) the State of Arizona, to be located at Northern Arizona University;
 - (B) the State of New Mexico; and
 - (C) the State of Colorado.
- (c) DUTIES.—Each Institute shall—
 - (1) develop, conduct research on, transfer, promote, and monitor restoration-based hazardous fuel reduction treatments to reduce the risk of severe wildfires and improve the health of dry forest and woodland ecosystems in the interior West;
 - (2) synthesize and adapt scientific findings from conventional research to implement restoration-based hazardous fuel reduction treatments on a landscape scale using an adaptive ecosystem management framework;
 - (3) translate for and transfer to affected entities any scientific and interdisciplinary knowledge about restoration-based hazardous fuel reduction treatments;
 - (4) assist affected entities with the design of adaptive management approaches (including monitoring) for the implementation of restoration-based hazardous fuel reduction treatments; and
 - (5) provide peer-reviewed annual reports.
- (d) QUALIFICATIONS.—Each Institute shall—
 - (1) develop and demonstrate capabilities in the natural, physical, social, and policy sciences; and
 - (2) explicitly integrate those disciplines in the performance of the duties listed in subsection (c).
- (e) COOPERATION.—Each Institute may cooperate with—
 - (1) researchers and cooperative extension programs at colleges, community colleges, and universities in the States of Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado that have a demonstrated capability to conduct research described in subsection (c); and
 - (2) other organizations and entities in the interior West (such as the Western Governors’ Association).
- (f) ANNUAL WORK PLANS.—As a condition of the receipt of funds made available under this Act, for each fiscal year, each Institute shall develop in consultation with the Secretary, for review by the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, an annual work plan that includes assurances, satisfactory to the Secretaries, that the proposed work of the Institute will serve the informational needs of affected entities.

SEC. 6. COOPERATION BETWEEN INSTITUTES AND FEDERAL AGENCIES.

In carrying out this Act, the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior—

- (1) to the extent that funds are appropriated for the purpose, shall provide financial and technical assistance to the Institutes to carry out the duties of the Institutes under section 5;
- (2) shall encourage Federal agencies to use, on a cooperative basis, information and expertise provided by the Institutes;
- (3) shall encourage cooperation and coordination between Federal programs relating to—
 - (A) ecological restoration;
 - (B) wildfire risk reduction; and
 - (C) wildfire management technologies;
- (4) notwithstanding chapter 63 of title 31, United States Code, may—
 - (A) enter into contracts, cooperative agreements, interagency personal agreements to carry out this Act; and
 - (B) carry out other transactions under this Act;
- (5) may accept funds from other Federal agencies to supplement or fully fund grants made, and contracts entered into, by the Secretaries;
- (6) may support a program of internships for qualified individuals at the undergraduate and graduate levels to carry out the educational and training objectives of this Act;
- (7) shall encourage professional education and public information activities relating to the purposes of this Act; and
- (8) may promulgate such regulations as the Secretaries determine are necessary to carry out this Act.

SEC. 7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, and every 5 years thereafter, the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, shall complete and submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a detailed evaluation of the programs and activities of each Institute—

- (1) to ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, that the research, communication tools, and information transfer activities of each Institute are sufficient to achieve the purposes of this Act, including—
 - (A) implementing active adaptive ecosystem management practices at the landscape level;
 - (B) reducing unnecessary planning costs;
 - (C) avoiding duplicative and conflicting efforts;
 - (D) increasing public acceptance of active adaptive ecosystem management practices; and
 - (E) achieving general satisfaction on the part of affected entities; and
- (2) to determine the extent to which each Institute has implemented its duties under section 5(c);
- (3) to determine whether continued provision of Federal assistance to each Institute is warranted.

(b) **TERMINATION OF ASSISTANCE.**—If, as a result of an evaluation under subsection (a), the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, determines that an Institute does not qualify for further Federal assistance under this Act, the Institute shall receive no further Federal assistance under this Act until such time as the qualifications of the Institute are reestablished to the satisfaction of the Secretaries.

SEC. 8. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act \$15,000,000 for each fiscal year.

(b) **LIMITATION.**—No funds made available under subsection (a) shall be used to pay the costs of constructing any facilities.

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The purpose of H.R. 2696 is to establish Institutes to demonstrate and promote the use of adaptive ecosystem management to reduce the risk of wildfires, and restore the health of fire-adapted forest and woodland ecosystems from the interior West.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

Research shows that the trend towards large, severe and frequent forest fires will continue without large-scale action. Seventy-three million acres in the Intermountain West are vulnerable to catastrophic fire. Intense fires of this magnitude are symptoms of unhealthy forests. Many forest fuel reduction treatments fail to restore unhealthy forests and therefore will not provide effective, long-term protection against unnatural wildfire.

Forest restoration and fuel reduction treatments should be applied at the scale required to reduce unnatural wildfires. The quality of treatments must be improved to accomplish long-term fire risk reduction and fix the underlying problem of degraded forest health. To achieve the quality of treatments required to reverse the trend in unnatural wildfires, treatments must start with solid science and be developed to meet the practical needs of managers. H.R. 2696 would facilitate this research.

COMMITTEE ACTION

H.R. 2696 was introduced on July 10, 2003, by Congressman Rick Renzi (R-AZ). The bill was referred to the Committee on Resources and additionally to the Committee on Agriculture. Within the Committee on Resources, the bill was referred to the Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health. On September 24, 2003, the Full Committee met to consider the legislation. The Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health was discharged from further consideration of the bill by unanimous consent. Mr. Renzi offered an amendment in the nature of a substitute incorporating changes recommended by the U.S. Forest Service and the Minority Members of the Committee clarifying definitions and intent. The amendment was adopted by unanimous consent. The bill as amended was then ordered favorably reported to the House of Representatives by unanimous consent.

COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding clause 2(b)(1) of rule X and clause 3(c)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Resources' oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the body of this report.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Article I, section 8 of the Constitution of the United States grants Congress the authority to enact this bill.

COMPLIANCE WITH HOUSE RULE XIII

1. Cost of Legislation. Clause 3(d)(2) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives requires an estimate and a comparison by the Committee of the costs which would be incurred in carrying out this bill. However, clause 3(d)(3)(B) of that rule provides that this requirement does not apply when the Committee has included in its report a timely submitted cost estimate of the bill prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office under section 402 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

2. Congressional Budget Act. As required by clause 3(c)(2) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section

308(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, this bill does not contain any new budget authority, spending authority, credit authority, or an increase or decrease in revenues or tax expenditures.

3. General Performance Goals and Objectives. As required by clause 3(c)(4) of rule XIII, the general performance goal or objective of this bill is to establish Institutes to demonstrate and promote the use of adaptive ecosystem management to reduce the risk of wildfires, and restore the health of fire-adapted forest and woodland ecosystems from the interior West.

4. Congressional Budget Office Cost Estimate. Under clause 3(c)(3) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee has received the following cost estimate for this bill from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office:

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, September 30, 2003.

Hon. RICHARD W. POMBO,
*Chairman, Committee on Resources,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for H.R. 2696, the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2003.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contacts are Megan Carroll and Deborah Reis.

Sincerely,

ELIZABETH M. ROBINSON
(For Douglas Holtz-Eakin, Director).

Enclosure.

H.R. 2696—Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2003

Summary: H.R. 2696 would authorize the appropriation of \$15 million a year for the Secretary of Agriculture to establish and provide assistance to three research institutes. Those institutes would develop strategies to reduce the risk of wildfires and enhance the health of forests in certain western states. CBO estimates that implementing this bill would cost \$4 million in 2004 and \$72 million over the 2004–2008 period, assuming appropriation of the specified amounts. The bill would not affect direct spending or revenues.

H.R. 2696 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments. The bill would authorize federal funds to establish and fund research institutes that could be located at state universities in Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. Participation by these states would be voluntary.

Estimated cost to the Federal Government: For this estimate, CBO assumes that H.R. 2696 will be enacted near the start of fiscal year 2004 and that authorized amounts will be provided as specified in the bill. Estimates of outlays are based on historical spending patterns for similar activities. The estimated budgetary impact of H.R. 2696 is shown in the following table. The costs of

this legislation fall within budget function 300 (natural resources and environment).

	By fiscal year, in millions of dollars—				
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
CHANGES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION					
Authorization Level	15	15	15	15	15
Estimated Outlays	4	11	20	20	17

Intergovernmental and private-sector impact: H.R. 2696 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments. The bill would authorize federal funds to establish and fund institutes that could be located at state universities in Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. Participation by these states would be voluntary:

Estimate prepared by: Federal Costs: Megan Carroll and Deborah Reis; Impact on State, Local, and Tribal Governments: Marjorie Miller; and Impact on the Private Sector: Cecil McPherson.

Estimate approved by: Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

COMPLIANCE WITH PUBLIC LAW 104-4

This bill contains no unfunded mandates.

PREEMPTION OF STATE, LOCAL OR TRIBAL LAW

This bill is not intended to preempt any State, local or tribal law.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

If enacted, this bill would make no changes in existing law.

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES,
Washington, DC, October 9, 2003.

Hon. SHERWOOD BOEHLERT,
*Chairman, Committee on Science,
House of Representatives, Rayburn House Office Building, Wash-
ington, D.C. 20515*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I request your assistance in expediting the consideration of H.R. 2696, the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act, authored by our colleague Rick Renzi. He introduced the bill on July 10, 2003, when it was referred to the Committee on Resources and additionally to the Committee on Agriculture. The Committee on Resources ordered the bill favorably reported with amendments on September 24, 2003, by unanimous consent. I have forwarded a copy of this reported text to your staff. Based on discussions with the Parliamentarian, I agree that the Committee on Science would receive a sequential referral of this bill.

Because of the limited number of days remaining in the first session of the 108th Congress and the importance of this bill to the wildfire-ravaged Western United States, I ask you not to exercise your right to a sequential referral of the bill so that it can be scheduled before adjournment. Of course, by agreeing to this re-

quest, you are not waiving jurisdiction over the bill, nor is this action to be construed as a precedent for other, similar legislation. In addition, I would support a request from the Committee on Science to be represented on any conference on H.R. 2696 or a companion Senate bill, should one become necessary. Finally, I would include this letter and any response you might have in the Committee on Resources bill report on H.R. 2696.

Thank you for your consideration of my request and the cooperation shown by you and Michael Bloomquist of your Committee staff.

Sincerely,

RICHARD W. POMBO,
Chairman.

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE,
Washington, DC, October 14, 2003.

Hon. RICHARD W. POMBO,
*Chairman, Committee on Resources,
House of Representatives, Longworth House Office Building, Wash-
ington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your October 9, 2003 letter concerning H.R. 2696, the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act. As you state in your letter, the Parliamentarian agreed that the Committee on Science would receive a sequential referral of this bill.

Recognizing your wish that the House of Representatives consider the bill as soon as possible, I will not exercise the Committee's right to a referral of H.R. 2696. Of course, waiving the Committee's right to a referral in this case does not waive the Committee's jurisdiction over any provision in H.R. 2696 or similar provisions in other bills.

I appreciate and accept your offer to support a request from the Committee on Science to be represented on any conference on H.R. 2696 or a companion bill, should one become necessary. Further, please include a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter in the Committee Report on H.R. 2696 and the Congressional Record during floor consideration of H.R. 2696.

Thank you for your consideration regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

SHERWOOD L. BOEHLERT,
Chairman.

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES,
Washington, DC, November 21, 2003.

Hon. BOB GOODLATTE,
*Chairman, Committee on Agriculture,
House of Representatives, Longworth House Office Building, Wash-
ington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I request your assistance in expediting the consideration of H.R. 2696, the Southwest Forest Health and Wild-

fire Prevention Act, authored by our colleague Rick Renzi. Mr. Renzi introduced the bill on July 10, 2003, when it was referred to the Committee on Resources and additionally to the Committee on Agriculture. The Committee on Resources ordered the bill favorably reported with amendments on September 24, 2003, by unanimous consent. I have forwarded a copy of this reported text to your staff. I understand that there were some initial questions regarding some of the bill language but that our staffs have been able to work out a text which addresses your concerns. It would be my intention to ask that this text be scheduled for Floor consideration.

Because of the limited number of days remaining in the first session of the 108th Congress and the importance of this bill to the wildfire-ravaged Western United States, I ask you not to insist on your additional referral of the bill and allow the Committee on Agriculture to be discharged so that H.R. 2696 can be voted on before adjournment. Of course, by agreeing to this request, you are not waiving jurisdiction over the bill, nor is this action to be construed as a precedent for other, similar legislation. In addition, I would support a request from the Committee on Agriculture to be represented on any conference on H.R. 2696 or a companion Senate bill, should one become necessary. Finally, I would include this letter and any response you might have in the Committee on Resources bill report on H.R. 2696.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. I appreciate our continued excellent working relationship on healthy forest issues and look forward to working with you to see H.R. 2696 enacted soon.

Sincerely,

RICHARD W. POMBO,
Chairman.

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
Washington, DC, November 21, 2003.

Hon. RICHARD POMBO,
*Chairman, Committee on Resources,
Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for forwarding a copy of the reported text of H.R. 2696 to my office. As you have noted, our committee has been able to come to an agreement about the text of this legislation. Mr. Renzi is the author of H.R. 2696, which establishes Institutes to demonstrate and promote the use of adaptive ecosystem management to reduce the risk of wildfires, and restore the health of fire-adapted forest and woodland ecosystems of the interior West.

As you are aware, the Committee on Agriculture received an additional referral of this legislation on those provisions of H.R. 2696 that fall within this Committee's jurisdiction. However, after conferring with Chairman Gutknecht of the Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry, I will be glad to waive further consideration of this measure so as to allow its timely consideration by the entire House of Representatives during this remainder of this legislative year.

This action is not intended to waive this Committee's jurisdiction over this matter for all purposes, and in the event a conference with the Senate is requested in this matter, I would ask you to support the Committee on Agriculture request to be represented.

Thank you very much for your courtesy in this matter and I look forward to continued cooperation between our Committees as well deal with these issues in the future.

Sincerely,

BOB GOODLATTE,
Chairman.

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