



# Resourceful Information

## NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

June 19, 2012

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### **Fact Check: Legislation Needed to Protect & Secure U.S. Border on Federal Lands**

Today, as part of the *Conservation and Economic Growth Act*, the House will consider a measure by National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands Subcommittee Chairman Rob Bishop (UT-01) to enhance [border security](#) on federal lands along the U.S. border. Title XIV is a common sense measure to ensure that Border Patrol has access to federal lands along the border and is not prohibited from doing its job due to bureaucratic red tape.

**Myth: The bill will not improve border security.**

**Fact:** Federal lands, particularly Wilderness areas, have become havens for criminal cartels because of their remoteness and because of Border Patrol's inability to properly access and patrol these lands. In these areas, activities such as the use of motorized vehicles and construction of roads and structures are prohibited. Unfortunately, criminal cartels are not well known for their adherence to the Wilderness Act, therefore our Border Patrol is placed at a significant disadvantage. The purpose of the legislation is not to place roads and surveillance equipment all over American federal lands. The bill states that these authorities are for the purpose of gaining control of the border. In areas where the border is secure, these authorities would not be needed.

**Myth: The bill creates a 100 mile "Drone Zone."**

**Fact:** The bill DOES NOT change current law as it relates to drones. The decision of where and when to use drones will be the same after enactment of this bill as it is today. This is an attempt by opponents to distract from the actual intent of the bill – to ensure that U.S. Border Patrol can protect and secure our border on federal lands.

Furthermore, opponents are circulating inaccurate maps regarding the lands that would be impacted by this bill. This measure only applies to FEDERAL LANDS and simply provides Border Patrol with the same access they already have on state and private lands. The 100 mile limit is consistent with the current statutory limit of Border Patrol: no more, no less.

**Myth: The bill is a federal land grab and expands federal authority.**

**Fact:** This legislation does not create any new enforcement authority, or limit any Constitutional Right. The bill only applies to federal lands, not state or private lands. These federal lands will still be managed and administered by the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture. Federal land remains federal land in this bill. The bill only ensures that federal land managers do not impede the Border Patrol's efforts to secure our border on public lands.

**Myth: The bill will cause environmental harm.**

**Fact:** The bill PROTECTS the environment. National parks and forests have been turned into landfills for criminal border crossers. Clothes, blankets, backpacks, water bottles, trash bags and empty food cans are frequently found discarded on federal land. This illegal dumping of trash along the border threatens wildlife, destroys habitat and attracts disease carrying insects such as mosquitoes and flies. Human waste is a growing problem that contaminates the drinking water for nearby residents. Allowing Border Patrol to protect federal lands along the U.S. border will help prevent environmental degradation caused by criminal cartels and is an essential step to re-opening areas along the border now closed to hikers, hunters and sightseers.

**Myth: The bill will block recreational activity and public access.**

**Fact:** The legislation is very specific to protect legal uses including hunting and fishing and further details what other recreational activities may occur. The bill focuses on border security that will protect federal lands, not destroy them as we have seen the criminal cartels do on some areas of the border. The legislation will help open lands back up to Americans that are currently unsafe to visit.

**Myth: The bill will negatively impact ranchers.**

**Fact:** The legislation was crafted in consultation with borderland ranchers. Ranchers have been disproportionately injured by our weak borders on federal lands. Ranchers have endured vandalism, home invasions, burglary, destruction of ranch infrastructure, loss of grazing land due to fires, and violence. This legislation seeks to end the lawlessness on federal lands near our borders that have left ranchers to fend for themselves. The legislation contains strict provisions protecting continued grazing rights and provides no authority for Border Patrol to limit access to federal land by ranchers.

The bill is supported by the following ranching and recreation organizations because it will result in safer conditions along the border: American Sheep Industry Association, Americans for Responsible Recreational Access, Arizona Cattle Grower's Association, Association of National Grasslands, BlueRibbon Coalition, California Cattlemen's Association, Montana Association of State Grazing Districts, Montana Public Lands Council, Montana Stockgrowers Association, Montana Wool Growers Association, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, North Dakota Stockmen's Association, Off-Road Business Association, Public Lands Council, Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association, Save the Trails, Specialty Equipment Market Association, Specialty Vehicle Institute of America, and United Four Wheel Drive Associations.

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