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## Onerous Regulatory Actions Stifle Economic Viability, Jobs, Access to National Forests

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Today, the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands held an [oversight hearing](#) on, “*Forest Service Regulatory Roadblocks to Productive Land Use and Recreation: Proposed Planning Rule, Special-use Permits, and Travel Management.*” At the hearing, Members heard about the devastating impacts of the Forest Service’s regulatory actions affecting management, multiple-use and access across the 193 million acres of federal land that the agency manages. Specifically, witnesses testified on the proposed Forest Service Planning Rule, conditions being placed on special use permits, and the 2005 Travel Management Rule.

*“Given the federal government’s ownership of over 600 million acres of abundant and accessible natural resources and natural wonders, we must ensure that policies are put in place so we can wisely and prudently balance the many competing and worthy uses of these lands and resources,”* **said Subcommittee Chairman Rob Bishop (UT-01).** *“Whether it is various insect and disease infestations, unnaturally-overgrown forest stands, catastrophic wildfire, or any combination of such, no one can deny that our National Forests are in dire straits. National forests are an important and necessary source of economic activity and recreation for local communities and the public. This resource needs to be managed for the benefit of all users and this cannot be done under a planning process that leaves land managers spinning their wheels on solutions in search of problems and still winding up in court at the end of the day.”*

In February, the Forest Service released a proposed Forest Service Planning Rule that will guide land and resource management plans for each of the agency’s 155 national forests and 20 grasslands. The Forest Service issued the first Planning Rule in 1979, which was replaced in 1982 by a new set of regulations. Since then, there have been a number of issues associated with the 1982 planning rule and subsequent attempts to revise it. Critics have cited the current Planning Rule as too complex, costly, lengthy and cumbersome for public involvement.

National Forests are a vital source of job creation, economic activity and recreation to local communities and the public. [Greg Mumm](#), **Executive Director of the national recreation group Blue Ribbon Coalition**, outlined the economic drawbacks of the proposed planning rule in its current form. *“The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) freely admits that its current planning regulations are costly, complex and procedurally burdensome. ... At a time when federally managed lands should be contributing to the economic vitality of our*

*nation, it is unacceptable that the recreation permit process as it is currently implemented on U.S. Forest Service lands is overly bureaucratic, expensive for both agencies and the public and often applied in an unfair and arbitrary manner. The current process no longer serves the public interest nor does it support the goals and objectives of land use planning.”*

**Dr. Ronald Stewart**, speaking on behalf of the **National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR)**, emphasized the underlying problems with Forest Service’s proposed planning rule. *“We believe that the overall content of the proposed rule is overly ambitious and optimistic, complex, costly, and promises much more than it can deliver. Rather than providing a simplified, streamlined process for developing and amending plans, we fear that the opposite will result. This is especially troubling in what are likely to be difficult times for funding of federal programs of all kinds.”*

Public participation in the planning process is fundamental to ensure land use decisions uphold multiple-use for the recreational, economic, and ecological prosperity of the land. However, according to **Demar Dahl**, **Chair of the Elko County Board Of Commissioners**, the Forest Service has not acknowledged or addressed issues brought up by local land users: *“In 104 encounters with the USFS in less than three years, we have seen no change in their plan as a result of our input. ... [W]e have worked hard trying to get straight answers on their plan and trying to get them to take our County Land Use Plan into account, but with no success.”*

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