



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

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CONTACT: [Press Office](#)
202-226-9019

Utah Governor Herbert Emphasizes Success of Western States in Land Management

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation held an [oversight hearing](#) featuring testimony by Utah Governor Gary Herbert, Chairman of the Western Governors' Association. The hearing highlighted the challenges of western states regarding federal and state land management.

At the hearing, Members and Governor Herbert discussed how states are able to find their own solutions to land management, tailored to their unique circumstances. In contrast, the federal government is bound by a statutory and regulatory framework that keeps them from effective land management. Utah and other states are successfully managing their lands in ways that protect natural resources and promote a healthy economy, and protect public access.

“Governor Herbert illustrated during today’s hearing that states are effectively and efficiently managing the lands and resources located within their borders and can handle this in the future,” said Subcommittee Chairman Rob Bishop (UT-01). “As we heard today, the federal government isn’t always the better option and as federal budgets get appropriately tighter, we ought to begin examining redundancies between state and federal land management programs. Frankly, the federal government is so often more of a hindrance than a help. If we want to get serious about responsible development of our resources, better land management practices, and real recovery of wildlife species, we ought to be looking more to the states for solutions and not to federal bureaucrats in Washington. I appreciate Governor Herbert’s insight and it is encouraging to see that states are truly leading the way. It is my hope that Washington will finally wake up and see that states are better suited to deal with many of the issues which Washington has managed poorly over the years.”

“Sadly, we have strayed far from this vision of states as independent and robust policy innovators,” said Gov. Gary Herbert, UT. “No one understands state challenges and demographics better than the people who reside and govern there. No one is more committed to the most effective use of limited resources for the best possible outcome, for both our lands and our citizens, than those who will directly live with the consequences of those decisions.”

Governor Herbert also highlighted how poor federal government management has impacted the health of our national forests and public lands.

“National Parks have an estimated \$11 billion maintenance backlog. The U.S. Forest Service has its own multi-billion dollar backlog,” said Gov. Gary Herbert. “Meanwhile, millions of acres of national forests have fallen victim to bark beetles and other insect and disease plights and are at risk to catastrophic wildfire. At the same time, a good portion of our federal grazing lands throughout the West are in poor condition. All of these conditions have resulted in an increase in the number and complexity of wildfires, leading further to exponentially higher suppression costs. Unfortunately, federal land management agencies operate within a statutory and regulatory framework that keeps them from effectively addressing rapid declines in range and forest health. Similarly, federal land management decisions today are paralyzed by litigation. Often, special interest groups use the judicial process to simply delay in an attempt to either wear out or bankrupt the opposition. This leads to further gridlock and the infamous ‘analysis paralysis’.”

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