

Congressman Wally Herger (CA-02): Statement for the Record

Thank you Chairman Bishop for holding this hearing and inviting me to participate. In the Northern California Congressional District I represent, the federal government owns a significant amount of the land, with it reaching as high as 75% in one county. Local communities collect no taxes from these lands, money that could go to schools and roads. The federal government is also unable to manage it properly. Now the Obama Administration is talking about increasing the number of presidentially-designated national monuments. This would be detrimental to local communities across our nation, and is why I have introduced H.R. 817, which would require Congress' approval for any National Monument designations by the President.

In 2000, President Clinton designated over 52,000 acres of federal lands as the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, which is adjacent to my Northern California Congressional district and is located in the state of Oregon. Some groups have advocated for areas of my congressional district to be included, but such plans have fortunately thus far been thwarted by local communities loudly voicing their concerns. Such a designation in Northern California could be devastating to the local economy, further limiting forest management and livestock grazing. Unfortunately, the Obama administration currently has the authority to reconsider at any time and expand the designation. The livelihoods of people in Northern California and across the Nation should not be at the whim of the President. Instead, national monument designations should be subject to the approval of Congress where the interests and viewpoints of affected Americans are understood and championed by their elected representatives.

As I referenced, a Bureau of Land Management document has revealed that the Obama Administration intends to unilaterally lock up more than thirteen million acres of federal land from multiple-use access. This is very troubling and would be devastating. In a time of high unemployment, it would lock even more American jobs away. The BLM memorandum provides further evidence that Congress must be a part of the National Monument designation process.

Since the 1980s, management of our forests and federal lands has stopped almost entirely. The jobs that depend on grazing, timber harvesting, mineral extraction, and recreation have slowly been eliminated by government regulations. This mismanagement of our resources does not affect the economy alone. It has led to unhealthy forests that become catastrophic wildfires that burn hotter, longer, and cover more land. National monument designations significantly harm rural forest communities.

In the face of severe economic challenges, we need to reform crippling government policies and regulations so that local communities can utilize their natural resources and prosper. These lands belong to the people, and local needs should drive their management, not a one-size-fits-all decree from Washington. If we utilize more of our natural resources, we can foster job growth, generate revenue for the treasury, and help prevent catastrophic forest fires. I look forward to working with the committee to pass common-sense reforms to the Antiquities Act of 1906, which would be a significant step towards limiting government overreach.

National Monuments Legislation Hearing
Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests & Public Lands
Tuesday, September 13 @ 10:00 AM | 1334 LHOB