

STATEMENT OF  
LENISE LAGO  
DEPUTY CHIEF, BUSINESS OPERATIONS  
U.S. FOREST SERVICE  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
MAY 20, 2014

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Administration's views on H.R. 2489, the Oregon Caves Revitalization Act of 2013.

H.R. 2489 would modify the boundary of the Oregon Caves National Monument, managed by the National Park Service (NPS), to include approximately 4,070 acres of land currently managed by the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest (Forest). The Monument would be designated as the Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve, with the Preserve being comprised of the lands previously managed by the Forest. The bill would allow for termination of grazing use on a Forest Service-managed grazing allotment, a portion of which would be located within the Preserve. The bill would also designate a river segment as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Ongoing Forest Activities that may be impacted by a transfer of jurisdiction include:

1. The Sucker Creek Legacy Roads environmental assessment, which is scheduled to be completed in this fiscal year. Implementation of this project, as proposed, would restore and maintain approximately 13 miles of National Forest System roads and decommission 2 miles within the Preserve.
2. The Pepperbuck Thinning and Fuel Reduction project, in cooperation with the non-profit organization Lomakatsi Restoration, would be entirely within the Preserve. In addition to hazardous fuels treatments, the project includes in-progress commercial and pre-commercial thinning in Late Successional Reserves (LSRs) stands. It would be desirable for these projects to continue.

Other impacts of a transfer of jurisdiction may include:

- The USFS Cave Creek Campground would be located in the proposed transfer.
- The Forest has completed Wild and Scenic Rivers eligibility studies for the tributaries of the Illinois River and other rivers. Cave Creek is within the current boundaries of the Monument. Lake Creek and No Name Creek in the proposed expansion were also included in the eligibility studies. Any needed Eligibility studies and subsequent Suitability analysis requirements would transfer to the Preserve.

Relinquishment and Retirement of Grazing Permit

Grazing on the portion of the approximately 26,750-acre Big Gray back Grazing Allotment (BGGGA), located in Josephine and Jackson counties, which would be in the Preserve, could continue at the current level and would be managed under laws applicable to the NPS.

Section 6 would direct the Secretary concerned to accept any voluntary relinquishment of a grazing permit by the permit holder for grazing on the Forest Service managed BGGGA, and if such a relinquishment is received, to end grazing on that area. Under H.R. 2489 only a small portion of the BGGGA would become part of the Preserve, but the legislation would potentially end grazing on the large part of the BGGGA located outside the Preserve if the grazing permittee relinquishes the grazing permit. We look forward to working with the Committee to address grazing management issues.

Conclusion

The expansion boundary, as currently proposed, could be adjusted in places so that the new boundary better facilitated future management by both Agencies. This adjustment will require further discussion between the Forest Service and NPS. We also would recommend that the bill be modified to be self-executing.

Coordination will continue as we move forward to ensure that the best and most efficient resource management is accomplished. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.