

September 18, 2013

The Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
1203 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hastings:

The undersigned livestock organizations strongly support *The Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act*, H.R. 1526. The mismanagement of our federally-owned forests has created great economic hardship and danger for our members, and threatens to do much worse in the coming years. Our industry and rural economies in the West will spend decades attempting to recover from the millions of dollars' worth of infrastructure damage and forage loss that have been the result of catastrophic wildfire in recent years. H.R. 1526 offers commonsense solutions that are not only good for the resources, but will benefit family businesses and rural communities throughout the west.

H.R. 1526 includes measures to improve current forest management in a number of ways. It would expedite the regulatory review process in high-risk areas, allowing needed fuel-reducing activities such as livestock grazing and logging to go forward without delay; increase state and local involvement in wildfire prevention; and improve rural schools, infrastructure, and overall economies by increasing timber harvests. It would also extend the successful stewardship contracting and good neighbor programs.

This legislation stands not only to save our members' livelihoods, but to save American taxpayer dollars as well. The federal government spends more than \$1 billion each year fighting fire. This does not account for any restoration activities, or the dollars spent by state and local governments. Implementing the preventative measures proposed in this legislation will relieve those annual expenses. It will also help put a stop to the crippling cycle of overregulation and litigation that has led to the current dire situation on public lands.

Again, we thank you for your attention to this important matter, and for supporting our members as they continue working to provide the base for strong communities and sound management of our nation's forests.

Sincerely,

Public Lands Council
American Sheep Industry Association
Association of National Grasslands
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
Arizona Cattle Growers Association