

**Statement of Congressman Scott Tipton**  
**Monday May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012**  
**Before the House Subcommittee on Water and Power and the House**  
**Subcommittee on Parks, Forests, and Public Lands**  
**Oversight Hearing on H.R. 4381, the “*Logs in the Road: Eliminating***  
***Federal Red Tape and Excessive Litigation to Create Healthy Forests,***  
***Jobs and Abundant Water and Power Supplies.*”**

Thank you Chairman McClintock and Chairman Bishop for convening today's hearing and taking the time to come to Montrose to hear from constituents of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District and across the West on this critical issue.

Properly managing our national forests is critical to western economies and livelihoods, a healthy natural environment, and affordable, reliable water and power supplies. Many of our western national forests are currently threatened by unhealthy conditions and bark beetle infestation that increase susceptibility to wildfire and damage wildlife habitat. These problems threaten lives and impact valuable jobs in the timber, energy, and recreation industries as well as countless indirect jobs in related industries. Increased fire risk also threatens western water quantity and quality and the generation and transmission of electricity.

Through prudent forest management and the ability to access and actively manage timber resources, communities can support jobs that depend on a viable timber industry. Effective forest management fosters healthy forests, protects against wildfires, and safeguards the natural beauty and tourism draw that western states provide while maintaining dependable water and power supplies.

In 2010, Senator Mark Udall wrote to USDA Secretary Vilsack requesting that the Forest Service conduct a full review of the mountain pine beetle outbreak to determine what more can be done and what additional tools may be needed to respond to the 2010 outbreak and future outbreaks as well. I want to thank Senator Udall for his continued attention and commitment to this matter. In the report produced in response to the Senator's request, the Forest Service cites routine litigation of Forest Service action approving timber harvesting and active management, drought, lack of allocation of resources to timber management, limited access to areas due to the inability to provide access roads, and federal land designations such as Wilderness which precludes forest treatment, as the primary contributing factors to the rampant bark beetle outbreak. The report also highlights that commercial thinning to reduce stand density in advance of the outbreak did not keep pace with the rate of the bark beetle infestation spread.

In Region 2 of the Forest Service, the timber industry has declined by 63% since 1986 according to the Forest Service report. It is time that we take

active steps to address the bark beetle epidemic and partner with the responsible stewards of our natural resources in the private sector who are willing to solve it, while putting people back to work. For too long, short term solutions have been put forward which fall short of addressing a long term problem, and small scale remedies applied to broad sweeping infestation.

The 2002 Hayman Fire, the largest in the Colorado's history, burned over 138,000 acres, cost nearly \$40 million in firefighting costs, destroyed 133 homes and forced the evacuation of 5,340 people. This catastrophic event could very well happen again if our forests are left to burn and, in fact, we were very recently reminded of the dangerous risk of wildfire that Colorado faces. As the summer season approaches, the probability of wildfire increases even further. It is my hope that this hearing on the interconnected issues of forest management will help highlight the problems that led to these conditions and lead to solutions that reverse some of the damage that has been done, and help avoid similar catastrophes in the future.