

**STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC LANDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION**

ON

**H.R. 1025, THE BERRYESSA SNOW MOUNTAIN NATIONAL
CONSERVATION AREA ACT**

BY

MRS. JUDY AHMANN

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Thank you Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and Members of the Subcommittee for giving me this opportunity to speak to you today regarding H.R. 1025, the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Conservation Area Act. I would also like to thank Congressman Thompson for introducing this important legislation as well as Ranking Member Grilajva, and Representatives Huffman and Garamendi, and the other bill co-sponsors.

My name is Judy Ahmann and I am a private landowner and rancher from Northern California. I have been actively involved in the California Cattlewomen's Association and have served as the President at the local and state levels. I have also served on the Executive Board of American National CattleWomen. I am a member of the Napa County Farm Bureau and donate time and raise money for scholarship funds for the local 4H and Future Farmers of America groups.

My husband, John, and I operate a 3,000 acre cattle ranch, Running Deer Ranch, located on the northeastern shoreline of Lake Berryessa in the Blue Ridge, which we have recently gifted to our three daughters. Our ranch is directly adjacent to Bureau of Land Management lands that are proposed to be included in this national conservation area. We are strongly supportive of the

Berryessa Snow Mountain National Conservation Area Act because we believe this legislation will help forever preserve this wonderful place and our way of life.

I live and work in an incredible place. Deer and black bear freely roam the steep hillsides while bald and golden eagles, osprey and falcons soar on rising thermals. We love the blue oak woodlands and marvel at the rare plants found on the serpentine soils. A national conservation area designation will keep the region the way it is, creating a lasting legacy of public enjoyment of the outdoors for activities like hunting, grazing, hiking, and rafting.

There are many benefits to a national conservation area, but one that is of particular importance to me is that this designation will require the three federal land managers – the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Reclamation – to develop a cohesive and comprehensive management plan for all the federal lands in the conservation area. A comprehensive management approach will allow the federal agencies and the local community to better coordinate on important regional land use issues such as fire management, noxious weed control, and eradication of illegal marijuana production.

As a rancher, I am supportive of the grazing language included in the legislation. The legislation does not impact existing grazing operations. The legislation also permits new grazing within the conservation area, so long as it is consistent with existing law and the purposes of the area.

Grazing may also be used as a management tool for activities such as noxious weed control or fire suppression.

As a private land owner, I am supportive of the private property language within the legislation. The legislation applies only to Federal lands and does not impact any non-federal land, including private property. Nothing in the legislation requires a landowner to allow public access to private property. And, the land management agencies must continue to provide adequate access to private inholdings within the conservation area.

Representative Thompson and his staff worked closely with local stakeholders to personally hear their thoughts and input, and to incorporate many of their ideas and suggestions. Because of this, H.R. 1025 has strong public support. Cities, counties, chambers of commerce and businesses throughout the region recognize the economic potential of this land designation. Landowners, farmers, and ranchers throughout the region support the bill because they see the value in preserving this area and their way of life. Recreation users from horse riders, to off road vehicle users and mountain bikers, to anglers, birders, hikers, and sportsmen treasure the region and are supportive of the proposed conservation area to maintain their recreational access. I have a list of supporters for this bill that I would like to submit with my testimony for the record.

By being a grandmother, protecting our public lands for future generations is important to me. I want to make sure that this scenic treasure is permanently protected so that it can be enjoyed by my grandchildren and their grandchildren. I am proud to say that my husband and I have been able to do just that. We have placed a conservation easement on Running Deer Ranch to ensure permanent protection of our ranch and the valuable habitat it provides, it is important to us to know that our ranch will remain a ranch as it is into the future.

In addition to permanently protecting the open space of our ranch, we also put a trail easement on our property to open public access to 9,100 acres of Bureau of Land Management federal public lands that had been landlocked. Today, the public can hike a path up to the Berryessa Peak public lands, legally, for the first time in 150 years. Breathtaking vistas, camping opportunities, rugged cliffs and seasonal creeks all can be enjoyed by the public now and for many years to come. I look forward to my grandsons hiking this trail with their Boy Scout troops.

In conclusion, the Berryessa Snow Mountain region deserves to be permanently protected for the enjoyment and benefit of current and future generations. I strongly support H.R. 1025 to protect the Berryessa Snow Mountain region and urge favorable and swift action on this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.