

Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Tom McClintock, Chairman

Hearing Memorandum

April 18, 2016

To: All, Subcommittee on Federal Lands Members

From: Majority Staff – Spencer Kimball, Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x6-7736)

Hearing: Oversight hearing on “*Exploring Current Natural Resource Research Efforts and the Future of America’s Land- Grant Colleges and Universities*”

The Federal Lands Subcommittee will hold an oversight hearing to examine current and future scientific research projects of land-grant colleges and universities (LGU) entitled “*Exploring Current Natural Resource Research Efforts and the Future of America’s Land-Grant Colleges and Universities*” on **April 20, 2016, at 10:30 a.m. in 1334 Longworth House Office Building**. During this hearing, the Subcommittee will hear testimony on a handful of the dozens of scientific research efforts currently ongoing at LGUs and examine ways to support and sustain future efforts and ensure they adequately inform natural resources policy decisions.

Policy Overview

- America’s LGUs provide premier educational opportunities for millions of students in numerous areas of study, including many focused on natural resources. Thousands of American professionals are employed in natural resource fields, including energy development, agriculture, ranching, hard-rock mining, and forestry, are educated at LGUs.
- LGUs perform and support numerous studies aimed at helping Americans tackle our most pressing natural resource challenges, including fire risk, invasive species, habitat protection/improvement, air and water quality, and many others. The findings and information generated through these studies play a critical role in the development, protection, and conservation of our nation’s natural resources and routinely inform broad and narrow policy decisions. In some instances, however, findings and information generated through this work can be ignored or discounted, particularly by federal land management agencies.
- LGUs are constantly seeking reliable funding sources to support the critical research utility of their institutions. Due to funding cutbacks and competition for financial resources within institutions, funding and executing this scientific research, as well as developing and maintaining the facilities and infrastructure that support it, is often challenging.

Invited Witnesses

Mr. Shane Burgess

Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona

Ms. Jody Jellison

Director, Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment
Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station
University of Massachusetts Extension
Amherst, Massachusetts

Mr. Chris Luecke

Dean, Quinney College of Natural Resources
Utah State University
Logan, Utah

Mr. Barry Perryman

Professor of Rangeland Ecology
College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources
University of Nevada-Reno
Reno, Nevada

Background

History

In 1862, Congress enacted the *Morrill Act of 1862* (7 U.S.C. 301 et seq.), which established the first land-grant institutions and marked a heightened focus on higher education in the U.S. Congress later enacted the *Morrill Act of 1890* (7 U.S.C. 321 et seq.), which expanded the land-grant system and created historically black land-grant universities. Both Acts reflected America's burgeoning need for additional technical, engineering, and agricultural training and education.

Sen. Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont (1810 - 1898), a staunch proponent of the LGU system and the expansion of higher education for all Americans, authored both laws. A recently-introduced bill offered by Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-WA), H.R. 4520, highlights the contributions Sen. Morrill made to the LGU system and the country as a whole by posthumously awarding him a Congressional Gold Medal.

The *Morrill Acts* granted federally-owned land to states and allowed them to sell those lands and use those proceeds to establish LGUs. Specifically, the *Morrill Act of 1862* provided states 30,000 acres of federal land per Senator and Representative. These institutions, as required by the *Morrill Act of 1862*, were endowed to focus on teaching agriculture, sciences,

military tactics, mechanics, and engineering, areas of study that generally contrast with liberal arts curriculums at non-LGU institutions. While some LGUs are now private institutions, most ultimately became public universities or colleges. In addition, many tribal colleges and other institutions, known as “1994 land-grant colleges,” more recently received LGU status and have been directly appropriated funds from Congress instead of proceeds from the sale of federal lands. Today, there are over 100 LGUs in all 50 states, four territories, and the District of Columbia.¹

Federal Funding

LGUs have received differing forms of federal financial support over time, beyond the initial authority provided to states to sell federal land and use revenues to establish LGUs under the *Morrill Act of 1862*. The second *Morrill Act* and other laws authorized the appropriation of funds for LGUs and a 1907 amendment to the *Morrill Act of 1862* provides permanent annual appropriations to states and territories to support LGUs.

Thereafter, the Hatch Act, passed in 1887, authorized federal appropriations to allow states to develop “agricultural experiment stations” in conjunction with LGUs. In 1914, the Smith-Lever Act created “Cooperative Extension Services” tied to individual LGUs to make publically available data and information generated from agricultural experimental stations. Today, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Cooperative State Research Service (CSRS) administers federal funds for LGUs allocated under the aforementioned laws. Because not all LGUs receive federal funds, many separate programs have been established to finance scientific research at many institutions.²

Studies and Research

LGUs across the nation perform numerous scientific studies and research on agriculture, grazing, energy development, mining, air, water, habitat, wildlife and plant species, and many other natural resource areas. Recent work of note focused on invasive plant and tree species; grazing practices; water quality and quantity; watershed and riparian area degradation; fire risk and fuels management; and many other topic areas.

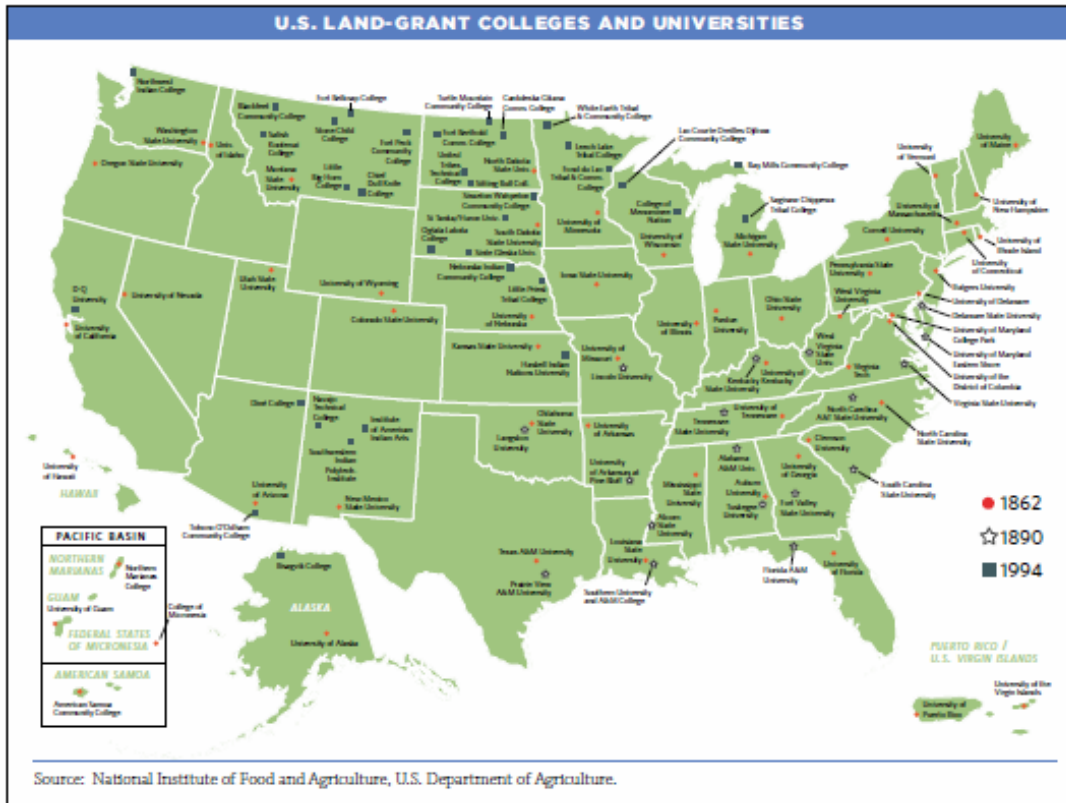
LGUs also play a critical role in monitoring the status of air quality, water quantity and quality, land condition, and wildlife and plant species. Collectively, LGUs and other public universities perform more than \$37 billion in research.³ These studies and efforts often inform or dictate natural resource policy and represent crucial backing for management decisions. In some instances, certain findings and information generated through these studies, however, can be ignored or discounted, particularly by federal land management agencies.

¹ *The Land-Grant Tradition*. The Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. 2012. p. 1.

² *Id.* p. 1.

³ [Press Release: APLU Announces Four Winners of Inaugural Economic Prosperity University Awards](#). November 2013.

LGUs are constantly seeking reliable funding sources to support this critical research element of their institutions. Due to funding cutbacks and competition for financial resources within institutions, funding and executing this scientific research, as well as developing and maintaining the facilities and infrastructure that support it, is often challenging.



Source: *The Land-Grant Tradition*. The Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. 2012. p. 9.