

**Tom Jankovsky**  
**County Commissioner**  
**Garfield County, Colorado**  
**Testimony: HR 6089, Healthy Forest Management Act 2012**  
**Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands**

**July 20, 2012**  
**9:00 a.m. EDT**

1. Good morning, Chairman, and Members of the Committee.
2. I am Tom Jankovsky
  - County Commissioner, Garfield County, Colorado
  - General Manager, Sunlight Mountain Resort
  - I have spent 40 years working with the forest industry – 15 in operations, 25 in management and administration, planning, and strategy
3. Have traveled to speak in person, and support HR 6089 for three reasons. The bill:
  - Addresses the deteriorating health of Colorado forests
  - Improves safety and strengthens stewardship.
  - Provides benefits to the local community.
4. First, the health of Colorado forests is deteriorating.
  - Colorado forests are extremely dense because of misguided management practices. The current management plan is to let our forests grow wild and to do nothing.
  - A healthy forest has 30% canopy. Our forests currently have 80-100%.
  - These conditions and others create a high risk to communities from fast moving wildfires that threaten life and property.
  - The Nation watched the recent tragedies in Colorado at Waldo Canyon, High Park, and elsewhere, the most devastating and costly wildfires in state history. Lives were lost, hundreds of homes burned to the ground.
  - Also, the bark beetle epidemic has deteriorated our evergreen forests, and drought conditions have impacted our Aspen forests.
  - Current federal regulations fail to recognize the importance of our forests regarding water conservation, water supply, wildlife habitat, recreation, economic benefit, multiple uses, and environmental health.
5. Next, HR6089 improves safety and strengthens stewardship
  - The Bill extends stewardship beyond that of the current Healthy Forest Restoration Act for an additional 20 years.
  - That existing legislation primarily deals with forest management and forest restoration in the wilderness
  - In contrast, the Healthy Forest Management Act takes management and restoration beyond the forest and wild land urban interface and into our communities. This Bill will create a healthy forest with less risk to urban areas.
  - With passage of the Bill, we will be able to expedite and improve hazardous fuels reduction in high-risk areas.
6. HR6089 provides benefits to the local community
  - The Bill empowers the Governor, state, and local communities to designate and cooperate with federal land managers to develop emergency hazard fuel reduction projects.
  - The Bill supports an emerging forest restoration industry, which provides tools and manpower for forest restoration and contributes to economic certainty.
  - Passage of the Bill will provide natural resources for lumber mills, furniture, firewood, biomass, and wood pellets, helping all of the related industries.

- The Bill creates jobs and provides other positive economic impacts in our local communities.
  - HR6089 allows for creative funding for public-private partnerships for hazardous fuel mitigation and reduction. For example, in Pitkin County, Colorado, in a project in Aspen's Starwood neighborhood, neighbors there paid for the restoration and mitigation of the forest adjacent to them.
7. In closing, I offer the following points:
- Federal land managers know the highest risk areas around us – this Bill gives them another tool in working with local communities to address those risks.
  - Educating the public on defensible space continues to be a top priority and should not be overlooked. In Colorado, citizens can be reimbursed by the state 50% of costs for improvements to defensible space.
  - The local use doctrine regarding public land use is extremely important to us. Nearly 70% of the lands in Garfield County, Colorado, are federally owned or managed. Forest management practices are a crucial part of the picture.
  - Indeed, the vitality and strength of the Western United States is closely tied to the health of our public lands.
  - Garfield County, Colorado, supports this Bill for the reasons stated.
  - Thank you.