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**Before the
HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS**

**Regarding
“RESTORING PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE PUBLIC LANDS: ISSUES IMPACTING
MULTIPLE-USE ON OUR NATIONAL FORESTS”**

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss issues impacting multiple-use on our National Forests. I would like to discuss a few issues that have been brought to my attention.

Background

The mission of the U.S. Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Forest Service manages 155 National Forests and 20 National Grasslands in 44 States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. By law, these lands are managed under multiple use and sustained yield principles.

The Forest Service and Secretary Vilsack have an ambitious vision for managing our forests and grasslands by using a collaborative management approach with a focus on making our forests more resilient, protecting water resources, and improving forest health, while creating jobs and recreation opportunities.

As the Regional Forester for the Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5), I oversee a vast and complex array of natural resources and opportunities for unparalleled outdoor adventures. The National Forests in California are important to creating and maintaining jobs in rural communities – our recreation visitation in California alone helps sustain 38,000 jobs (*Data based on National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM), 2010*). Recreation visitors annually spend more than \$2 billion directly in communities within 50 miles of the National Forests in Region 5. Region 5 currently sells the largest volume of woody biomass, through timber sale or stewardship contracts for fuel reduction and other objectives, in the country – 92 million board feet MMBF {184,000 CCF} were sold in 2010. The National Forests provides 50 percent of California’s water to 20 million urban and agricultural users. I can’t think of a more compelling reason to manage these lands sustainably.

Our forest resources across the region provide the means for people to develop strong connections to the land and vital values that contribute to healthy lives: clean water, clean air, natural scenic beauty, spiritual renewal, important natural resources and protection of rare species, majestic forests, wilderness, and a connection with history.

In the past, user impacts and conflicts focused on issues such as timber, grazing, and mining. Currently, recreation in all of its forms places the largest demand on the National Forests in California due to proximity of many of the forests to urban population centers with mobile populations who seek the recreational amenities offered by these lands.

Ecological Restoration

A key element of sustainable management is ecological restoration. By restoration, I do not mean restoring the landscape to pre-European settlement conditions. Restoration is based on the understanding that America's forests are dynamic; they have been changing for thousands of years. Ecological restoration is about ensuring that our National Forests are healthy and can successfully adapt to change or recover from damages that can result from a variety of sources. Forest Service policy recognizes and reinforces the importance of ecological restoration as the basis for integrating resource management programs in our agency. Our policy provides the framework for the Forest Service to effectively address urgent 21st century environmental issues. Restoration also boosts local economies and creates green jobs while sustaining healthy, productive resources. The resources we manage, for example forests, watersheds, and wildlife habitat, are naturally interconnected. Our goal is to achieve integrated long-term outcomes on a landscape scale to make land and water ecosystems more sustainable, more resilient, and healthier under current and future conditions.

With a focus on ecological restoration, some examples of ecosystem services and community economic benefits that will be enhanced are:

- Delivery of clean water and an improved flow regime that benefits people, fish, and wildlife
- Increased forest resilience to wildfire through treatments (including prescribed fire and thinning)
- Rural economic health through the jobs that come from restoration work and the forest products industry
- Outdoor recreation and scenic beauty
- Wood products
- Wood biomass for energy

Land and Resource Management Planning

The purpose of forest-scale land management planning is to guide the long-term management, protection, and restoration of our Nation's forests and grasslands for the benefit of human communities and natural resources. In February 2011, the Forest Service sought comments on a proposed new national Land and Resource Management Planning Rule (Planning Rule) to guide future forest plan revisions. As stated in the proposed rule, forest plans will be strategic, focusing on the development of a framework for adaptive management of the National Forests

consistent with all the laws and regulations that apply, such as the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act and the Endangered Species Act. The proposed Planning Rule emphasizes integrated resource management so that all elements of sustainability are considered as a whole, instead of as separate resources or uses.

Region 5 has been revising forest plans for the National Forests in California under the 2000 Planning Rule using the 1982 Planning Rule's procedures. My Regional Office staff has been working with interested individuals and organizations to identify issues, trends, and sources of information that will provide the basis for revisions. We are also developing agreements with organizations that represent county governments to ensure timely and substantive involvement with county government officials throughout the planning process.

The Regional strategy is to revise the 14 outdated forest plans using the proposed 2011 Planning Rule. The plans for the four southern California forests were litigated, and a settlement agreement was reached. The forest staffs are completing work now associated with the settlement agreement. All Region 5 forest plan revisions are expected to articulate the Regional vision for ecological restoration over the next 10 to 15 years.

Recreation

Outdoor recreation is one prominent use of National Forest System lands in California. National Forest recreation provides healthy opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, connecting people to their Federal land and representing a significant contribution to the economy of many rural areas. The most recent National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) figures show that the National Forests in California receive approximately 30 million visitors every year. As previously stated, spending by recreation visitors totals \$2 billion in California and helps sustain 38,000 jobs (*Data based on National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM), 2010*).

Visitors participate in a wide range of motorized and non-motorized recreation activities, including camping, hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, downhill and cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and operating off-highway vehicles (OHVs). We have a tremendous obligation and a great opportunity to serve these forest users and, through them, our local communities and economies.

Travel Management

OHV use is increasing, and the proper management of this use is an important part of our mission. The Forest Service manages approximately 37,000 miles of National Forest System roads that are open to public motor vehicle use in California. In addition, approximately 16,000 miles of trails are managed by the Forest Service in California, with an estimated 5,000 miles open to motor vehicle use, including use of over-snow vehicles. The Forest Service recognizes that these uses along with all other recreation uses, need to be managed in a sustainable manner.

In 2005, the Forest Service issued a rule that provides a national framework for designating a system of roads, trails and areas for motor vehicle use. Since then, the Forest Service in California has been working within the national framework to complete the route and area designation process on all 18 National Forests within the state. We will continue to make significant strides in reducing the damage that results from unmanaged use of motor vehicles on

approximately 13,000 miles of unauthorized roads and trails in California. The Region and the Agency must balance the demand for access with an infrastructure we can afford, while supporting a suite of multiple uses, including ecosystem services, outdoor recreation, timber, rangeland, minerals and energy as well as and cultural uses. Travel management is not about restricting public access or opportunity, but rather to provide enhanced opportunities for public enjoyment of the National Forests, including motorized and non-motorized recreation experiences.

I recognize that some forests have identified unauthorized roads and trails that lead to areas traditionally used for hunting camps or dispersed camping that could be designated as motorized trails in the future to increase access opportunities. Changes to the forest transportation system will be based on community engagement and implemented at the local level.

I also recognize that implementation of travel management designation decisions will change the way that some people access and experience their National Forests. Unmanaged motor vehicle use has resulted in unplanned roads and trails, erosion, watershed and wildlife habitat degradation, and impacts on cultural resource sites. Properly managed motor vehicle use will lead to safe vehicle access and protect our valuable natural resources. The Forest Service values sustainable public access and resource protection, and will continue to seek balanced solutions to achieve our multiple-use objectives. We will continue to seek public participation and partnerships to meet our often challenging goals with respect to motor vehicle use on the National Forests in California.

Cost Recovery

Cost recovery regulations were promulgated by the Forest Service in 2006. Federal law authorizes Federal agencies to require those who receive identifiable services and benefits beyond those received by the public to pay for the cost of those services and benefits. In addition, some authorities for special use authorizations provide for cost recovery fees. The Forest Service regulations are consistent with the Bureau of Land Management's rules for its right-of-way program. The rule authorizes the Forest Service to charge fees for processing special use applications and for monitoring compliance with special use authorizations, subject to limitations enumerated in the rule. For example, recreation special use applications and authorizations involving 50 hours or less to process or monitor are exempt from cost recovery fees. The cost recovery regulations allow the Forest Service to provide better customer service and reduce the special use permit application backlog.

The application of this rule has caused some dissatisfaction from applicants who have enjoyed these services and benefits, some for over 30 years, without having to pay a fee. In 2010, in response to concerns raised, I began to require Regional office review of all major cost recovery agreements for recreation special use permits prior to execution. This ensures consistency in cost recovery estimates and ensures that only appropriate cost recovery fees are charged.

Cabin User Fee Fairness Act

Another big issue that I hear a lot about is the Cabin User Fee Fairness Act of 2000, in short CUFFA. Recreation residences are an historic and well-recognized recreation opportunity for thousands of visitors. This use is one of the largest single types of special use authorized on

National Forest System (NFS) lands. The program began in the early part of the 20th century, when cabin owners were permitted to occupy NFS land during the summer months in exchange for a fee. When this recreational cabin program began, there was relatively little recreational use of the National Forests, and limited interest in building and owning a remote cabin on NFS land. Today, similar private land at ski resorts, near lakes, and remote mountain settings are highly prized, selling for prices beyond the means of many Americans.

In the early years of the program, permit fees were nominal; but since the 1950s, the Forest Service has been Congressionally-mandated to obtain fees that reflect market value for the use of NFS land. CUFFA directed the Forest Service to develop and implement a more consistent procedure for determining cabin user fees. In 2006, the Forest Service published implementing regulations. Increasing fees have led to controversy with cabin owners, and have resulted in enactment of multiple fee moratoriums and caps over the years.

With over 6,100 recreation residences in California, the Forest Service works closely with permit-holders and is sensitive to their concerns about the impacts of annual fee increases. We will continue to work with the National Forest Homeowners Association and members of Congress on potential alternatives to CUFFA.

Sustainable Timber Harvests

Sustainable timber harvest is of great interest to Californians. Local mills are very important to the economy and healthy forests in California and the Forest Service needs to maintain a viable wood products infrastructure to help meet our ecological restoration and fuels reduction goals. As with the rest of the nation, the market for timber products in California is depressed.

The Region is committed to meeting our expectation for timber volume, and expects to achieve 90 percent of our target of 349 million board feet (MMBF) {698,000 CCF} in 2011. We are also fully committed to maintaining a sustainable wood supply from public lands in California, and in achieving the goals of the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Act to promote ecologic and economic health for Federal lands and communities in the Sierra Nevada area. The Region will continue to review all fuels and vegetation management projects for the opportunity to increase their economic viability and support jobs, while achieving project goals and maintaining requirements essential to mitigate potential effects to other resource values.

Timber sale and stewardship contracts will continue to be used as tools to achieve landscape restoration goals, accomplish hazardous fuel reduction treatments, and promote the utilization of woody biomass. However, the Forest Service continues to be challenged by appeals and litigation, both at the project level and at the broader scale management level, such as the Sierra Nevada Framework. Through an open and inclusive forest planning process, as well as use of authorities in the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA) such as the pre-decisional objection process, we are considering and attempting resolution of concerns prior to a decision.

Grazing/Mining

Livestock grazing is a vital component of the Forest Service's multiple-use mandate for NFS lands. Livestock grazing provides high quality forage and the production of meat and wool for the market. The Forest Service will continue to make forage available from lands that are

suitable for grazing to qualified livestock operators. Properly managed grazing can improve species diversity and maintain wildlife habitat.

Operating a successful and safe mining program is in the national interest of the United States and the American people. The Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970, which is implemented by the Secretary of the Interior declares that it is the continuing policy of the Federal Government in the national interest to foster and encourage private enterprise in the development of an economically sound and stable domestic mining industry. Also in the national interest are the orderly and economic development of domestic resources and reserves, and the reclamation of metals and minerals to help assure the fulfillment of industrial, environmental, and security needs.

Conclusion

In closing, Americans cherish the National Forests and Grasslands for the benefits they provide, which include opportunities for positive economic impacts for rural communities, healthy recreation and exercise, natural scenic beauty, natural resources, protection of rare species, wilderness, a connection with history, and opportunities for unparalleled outdoor adventure. The Forest Service must strike an appropriate balance in managing all types of activities within the capacities of the land. The Forest Service is an important economic link to a healthy California economy. The Forest Service recognizes the importance of on-going collaboration with stakeholders to achieve mutual benefits.

Collaboration with local communities, as well as with members of Congress, will be key in the active management of the Nation's forests. We can work together to develop a shared land stewardship through citizen engagement. Collaboration can be an effective tool to bridge differences among interest groups and to consider the needs of the public.

This concludes my prepared statement and I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.