

Statement of  
Representative Steve Stivers  
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands: Legislative Hearing  
April 17, 2012

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I want to thank Chairman Bishop for holding this important legislative hearing today on my legislation, the Land Acquisition to cut National Debt (LAND) Act. As a new member of Congress, I came to Washington, DC to help balance the Federal budget and get government to live within its means, just as American families do so everyday.

To that extent, I introduced H.R. 4193 as part of the House Majority's YouCut program to cut government spending. The measure provides that there shall be no new net increase in the acres of certain Federal land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or the Forest Service, unless the Federal budget is balanced for the year in which the land would be purchased. This legislation will result in potential budget savings and help better protect and maintain the land the federal government currently owns.

As the Committee is aware, the U.S. Forest Service controls 193 million acres, the Bureau of Land Management controls 264 million acres and the National Park Service controls 87 million acres. This is nearly a quarter of the entire land mass of the United States (544 million acres of 2.3 billion), including more than 80 percent of Nevada and Alaska, and more than half of Idaho, Oregon, and Utah.

With the national debt currently standing at more than \$15 trillion and counting, we need to consider different approaches as we work together to balance the budget and control government spending. By simply suspending the net purchase of new federal lands, the government could possibly save up to \$3 billion in taxpayer money over 10 years.

The Obama Administration has proposed \$450 million in Fiscal Year 2013 for federal land purchases, a \$160 million spending increase, or 58 percent, compared to funding levels when the President first took office. I believe those increases are out of line particularly when we need to be working to find ways to reduce government spending and the national debt.

In addition to the budget savings provided in the legislation, limiting net new government land purchases, can allow us to better conserve and maintain the land we already have for future generations. A 1999 report by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) highlighted those federal agencies, such as the Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management, might protect the environment better "by improving management in currently held areas rather than providing minimal management over a larger domain."

In 2003, the Government Accountability Office reported that the National Park Service's maintenance backlog was more than \$5 billion. Since then, Federal land acquisitions have accelerated, placing even greater burdens on an obviously inefficient and overstrained system.

So again, my legislation only seeks to suspend net new federal acquisition by government until we balance our budget and help better protect and maintain the land the federal government currently owns. I believe this is the type of reasonable approach to federal land management that the American people expect.

Again, I appreciate the Chairman for allowing me to testify today and holding this hearing.