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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

**Opening Statement by
Chairman Rob Bishop**

**Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
At the Joint Subcommittee Oversight Field Hearing on**

***“Logs in the Road: Eliminating Federal Red Tape and Excessive Litigation to
Create Healthy Forests, Jobs and Abundant Water and Power Supplies”***

**Monday, May 14, 2012
Montrose, Colorado**

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As many of you are witness to each day, the Mountain Pine Beetle has turned most of Colorado, not to mention pine forests throughout the West, into a sea of dead and dying trees. Sadly, decades of the federal government’s failed forest policies have in part allowed this *native* insect to reach epidemic proportions that have impacted over three million acres in Colorado alone. Bark beetles have so far claimed over 40 million acres nationwide – equal to nearly 20% of the National Forest System.

A sharp decline in forest management has left these forests in an extremely unnatural and unhealthy state, the result of which has been a feeding frenzy for the beetles but only dead trees for the rest of us.

These forest conditions present a multitude of challenges to beneficial use of our national forests. The danger of falling trees threatens access both for management and recreation, utility right-of-ways, and correspondingly the integrity of the power grid, as well as water quality and supply. These forests also impose an overwhelming risk of catastrophic wildfire to mountain communities in addition to compounding the aforementioned threat to multiple-use.

Finally, and to be blunt, the sight of a dead landscape is simply unappealing to many who come to enjoy their public lands across the Rocky Mountain West.

Fortunately, we are in a position to change course on this issue. Active, scientific forest management – when not impeded by inflexible regulations and frivolous appeals and lawsuits – can begin the process of restoring our forests. This epidemic was decades in the making and will not be curbed overnight, but it is important to ensure that our federal land managers have the flexibility to implement forest management projects and utilize our partners to maintain infrastructure that is necessary to ensure the long term health and productivity of the land and natural resources that have been entrusted to their care. In sum, and as I’m sure we’ll hear from some of our witnesses, active management is better for the forests, better for the taxpayer – especially given the billions now spent annually on fire suppression – and better for our western communities that are forced to play host to this federal estate.

I thank Representative Tipton for his leadership on this issue and for inviting our subcommittees to Montrose to see firsthand the impacts of this issue and the path towards addressing it. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.