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**Opening Statement of
Chairman Rob Bishop**
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Oversight Field Hearing on
***"Restoring Public Access to the Public's Lands:
Issues Impacting Multiple-use on Our National Forests"***
Monday, September 19, 2011 at 10:00 AM PT
Sacramento, California

As prepared for delivery.

As many of you aware, federal regulations, particularly with regard to land-use, is a topic of strong debate back in Washington D.C. The United States is a nation that has been blessed with extraordinary natural wonders as well as plentiful and accessible natural resources. Given the federal government's ownership of over 600 million acres of the land containing these resources and incredible natural sights, much of this debate is centered on how to best balance the many competing and worthy uses of public lands and resources.

Public lands policy through much of our history and right up into the second half of the 20th century focused on developing our resources to provide the raw material for a growing, prosperous and freedom-loving nation.

However, the last four to five decades have witnessed a paradigm shift towards a hands-off lands policy, or in one word - preservation. While there is certainly nothing wrong with designations aimed to preserve small areas of special significance – if such designations are made with the full input and consideration of local communities - what has been lacking in this shift is proper balance.

Unfortunately for many of our rural communities, the well-intentioned laws passed during this shift have allowed for a minority of extremists to abuse the regulatory process and bring multiple-use of our federal lands to its knees. This tragedy is evident across the expanses of federal land in my home State of Utah and throughout the West, but it is particularly obvious on the 193 million acres of National Forest land managed by the Forest Service.

Whether it is various insect and disease infestations, unnaturally-overgrown forest stands, catastrophic wildfire, or any combination of such, no one can deny that our National Forests are in dire straits. National forests are an important and necessary source of economic activity and recreation for local communities and the public. This resource needs to be managed for the benefit of all users and I strongly believe that there is plenty of it to go around.

We will hear from witnesses this morning who will describe a variety of situations in which their popular and longstanding use of public land has been impacted by not only increasing regulations and policy, but also the Forest Service's implementation of such.

During a time when certain activists are all too eager to exercise the full force of the law to attack multiple-use, we need our federal land managers working with us to keep the public's lands open for the use and enjoyment of all. Unfortunately, my constituents in Utah and many who rely on public lands for recreation and their livelihood get the sense that our convoluted federal lands policy has given land managers more reason to err on the side of simply saying 'no'.

One of my top priorities in Congress and as Chairman of this subcommittee is to address this conflict. I hope that this hearing will help us identify the tools and flexibility for the Forest Service and other land managers to say 'yes' and continue to uphold open access and use of our lands.

Finally, I would like to note that this is an official meeting of the National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee, just as we would have in Washington. As such, we will only be hearing from the invited witnesses. With that, I thank Mr. McClintock for inviting the subcommittee to discuss this issue and I now recognize him for any opening statement he might have.