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

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**Opening Statement by**  
**Chairman Rob Bishop**  
**At the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands**  
**Legislative Hearing on**  
**H.R. \_\_\_\_, "National Forest County Revenue, Schools and Jobs Act of 2011"**  
**Thursday, September 22, 2011 at 10:00 a.m.**

*As prepared for delivery:*

This morning we will look at two pieces of legislation that represent a much-needed and important paradigm shift in federal lands policy. Public lands policy through much of our history and right up into the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century focused on developing our resources and utilizing public lands for the benefit of a growing and prosperous nation.

Through that time, our national forests were managed for a variety of purposes, including secure water flows, a continuous supply of timber, recreation opportunities and the perpetual protection of forest resources. Furthermore, the federal government also recognized an obligation to counties when it agreed to share revenues from the federal lands in their backyard as well as proceeds from the sale of the public domain.

Since then, we have tragically seen the federal government become an absentee landlord on the third of our country it currently owns. Instead of managing healthy and productive lands, the federal land management agencies now see nearly half of their budget going to wildfire suppression and the federal estate has a maintenance backlog in the billions. This lack of management has left our counties and schools holding the bag for the consequences of this inaction.

The first piece of legislation we will consider today is a draft proposal put forth to address the expiration of the Secure Rural Schools program. This proposal is by no means intended to return our national forests to the days of being a 'timber factory' as some may like to spin it. The draft "National Forest County Revenue, Schools and Jobs Act" is about giving the Forest Service a clear direction and the ability to actually manage a portion of its land for the benefit of rural communities while beginning to improve forest health in the process. For too long we have managed our national forests in a way that is completely devoid of the social and economic realities facing the counties and states that host the public's lands. There are a number of issues that need to be resolved with this proposal to ensure that it can be feasibly and sustainably implemented, but that is why we have this legislative process and I look forward to working to ensure these issues are addressed.

The second bill is one I have introduced to address a longstanding issue with the federal government's abandonment of land disposal and fiduciary responsibility to Utah and twelve other Western States. The "Action Plan for Public Lands and Education Act of 2011" would allow those States to select five percent of the federal land within their border to manage for educational purposes in lieu of the five percent of proceeds it was supposed to receive under the federal government's previous disposal policies. The APPLE Act will give these States much-needed certainty in providing basic funding to education in response to a reversal of previous federal policy.

Opponents of these two solutions have so far offered plenty of the usual criticism of multiple-use and upholding the sacred cow of federal ownership, yet conversely have offered no concrete alternatives for how to address the underlying problems beyond continuing to write a check cashed from the People's Republic Bank of China. By looking at these two proposals, this committee is taking an important step towards changing this course and reinstating a purpose of scientifically managing our land and resources for the greater good and not left to be locked away at the whim of a few who think they know best. I thank our witnesses for being here. I look forward to hearing their testimony and discussing the issue of making our public lands once again work for the public who live among them, taxpayers nationwide and the long-term health of our renewable resources.