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Committee on Natural Resources
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Opening Statement by
Chairman Rob Bishop
Before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing on
H.R. 41, H.R. 113, H.R. 490, H.R. 608, H.R. 977, H.R. 1126, H.R. 1413 and H.R. 2050
October 25, 2011 10:00 a.m.

As prepared for delivery.

Monuments, wilderness and other land-use designations have been a topic of much debate in this subcommittee. While there are certain areas of special significance that should be managed as wilderness or otherwise preserved for future generations, we need to ensure that those designations are fully vetted and protect the interests and livelihoods of the communities and stakeholders that could be impacted.

This hearing is an important part of that process. Locking-up lands throughout the West has the potential to restrict access for energy production, recreation, and other job-creating activities and devastate the rural communities that unfairly bear the brunt of poor land management decisions. It is important to return to a practice of looking at wilderness proposals thoroughly and individually as opposed to comprehensive omnibus bills and Administrative actions that seek to designate millions of acres in one fell swoop with little, if any, consideration of the consequences.

Secondly, I also look forward to exploring options to reduce the federal estate, particularly in those cases in which the government has identified excess or surplus lands. The federal government currently has a multi-billion dollar maintenance backlog for the lands it holds. Especially given our current budget climate, it makes perfect sense to free the federal government from land it doesn't need and allow agencies to focus on our most prized national parks, forests and other lands.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today and I now recognize the Ranking Member for his opening statement.