

TO: Honorable Scott McInnis, Chairman, US House of Representatives Committee on Resources, Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health

FROM: Dr. L.D. Garrett, Executive Director, National Forest County Partnership Restoration Program

DATE: April 18, 2002

SUBJECT: Subcommittee Testimony for Dr. Lawrence D. Garrett on Community-Based Land Management and Charter Forest: The National Forest County Partnership Restoration Program

Mr. Chairman and Honorable members of the U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee on Forests and Health. The partners and stakeholders of the County Partnership Restoration Program (CPR Program) seize this opportunity to share information on what we feel is a progressive example of "Community-Based Land Management" under your proposed "Charter Forest Program."

I am Lawrence Garrett, Executive Secretary for the National Forest County Partnership Restoration Program. I am here today to represent the CPR Managing Partners, County Commissioners and Forest Supervisors, and to turn represent the diverse local community stakeholder interests supporting our program.

The Pilot Forest Concept we will speak to today is a County Government/National Forest Partnership, established to address critically needed forest watershed restoration management on three Pilot National Forests in Idaho, Colorado and New Mexico. The approach has broad program requirements, ranging from community consultation and planning to implementation of extensive restoration projects.

The communities and counties we represent are adjacent to the three pilot forests. Included are citizens and residents from seventeen counties and over 100 small cities, towns and villages. Our counties are dominated by public land, occupying over 65% of the land base. Much is USDA Forest Service land, totaling over seven million acres on the three forests. As such, all of our communities are directly impacted by management direction on these lands.

We want to thank Chairman McInnis, Representative Udall and this Committee for pursuing examples of Community-Based Land Management under the Charter Forest Concept. This critically needed approach by the Committee is giving hope to small western communities, that you value their contributions. Your efforts will stimulate needed debate on how to best plan, structure and program community based forest restoration and management programs in cooperation with federal agencies.

Why did our CPR effort begin: We wanted to support local community interests to reduce threats of wildfire and declining forest watershed health, and maintain their traditional access to public lands. County governments have initiated this Program, because they have the primary government responsibility for issues of health, welfare and safety of their citizens and their property. And, in much of the rural west, these issues and federal public land management are inseparable.

How did the CPR effort begin: The CPR Program grew out of extensive community led forest restoration research, demonstration and planning programs, which have been developed cooperatively with the Forest Service and broad based agency and community groups. These efforts have revealed that aggressive restoration is a desired management alternative.

It became apparent to all three extended communities, that their future would be significantly improved if became pro-active and aggressively pursued restoration across the three forests. This requires development of formal cooperative programs with the local Forests, extensive collaboration of stakeholders, and complex planning for the needed restoration.

What Structure is developed for the CPR Program: A simple county/federal agency partnership structure is proposed, wherein specific responsibilities are assigned to differing entities. Seventeen county governments and three National Forests are managing partners for the program, and have the responsibility for general program management and funding. Participating partners are federal, state, tribal and community governments who have formal authorities and responsibilities for the forests, watersheds, communities, people etc. Participating community groups and individuals are the critical stakeholders who have explicit interest in the public lands, and related goals of protection, management and use.

The lead partners are seeking the advise and assistance of expert organizations, such as the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution to help design a sound structure and program to achieve partnership objectives.

County and federal agencies have wide ranging authorities that permit joint cooperation on budgets and programs. Additional agreements are necessary for the collaboration, science, economic development, information and education and other programs required to implement the extensive forest watershed restoration programs. Additional base funding for the participating forests and counties is necessary to reach proposed goals.

The partners and stakeholders have endorsed a restoration program approach that will not require changes in existing law, and that can be initiated under current Forest Plans. We would like to explore ways of expediting the process and ESA requirements, while fully meeting the intent of these laws. The Pilot Forest presents an excellent opportunity to test and streamline administrative procedure. Definition of mission, goals, structure, and restoration programs are contained in our formal CPR documents. The Pilot Forest Concept would allow local governments to be conveners, while leaving the decisions to the responsible line officers of the three National Forests

What are our accomplishments to date: The CPR communities have been very active for the past 2-5 years supporting many collaborative programs on forest restoration science, restoration workshops, and watershed restoration demonstration programs. For the past year the communities have been developing an extensive collaborative process to design the CPR Program for the three Pilot Forests and 17 county area. The three Forest CPR Program has involved over 200 local stakeholders in the approach. State legislatures, governors, congressional delegations, and critical federal, state, tribal and local government agencies have endorsed the program. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is a critical cooperator in our program. The CPR community groups are aggressively pursuing extensive cooperation and funding for needed collaboration, science, economic development, information and education and site restoration programs.

How do we define a Charter/Pilot Forest: Our example of a Pilot Forest and its structure is primarily based on the specific desires of our stakeholders and restoration needs of our forests. We feel the Committee and Secretary should examine and hopefully implement several models.

We do feel several criteria are important to make the "Pilot" or "Community Based" Forest Concept successful as follows:

1. Strong leadership in all program areas from local community groups and governments.

2. Extensive community collaboration on all program elements.
3. Commitment from local and federal governments to short and long term program accomplishment.
4. A commitment to use science and monitoring to guide an adaptive management process.

What do we believe a Charter/Pilot Forest can accomplish: We are convinced that empowering local communities to have a greater role in public land management will produce wide ranging benefit to natural resources on our public lands and human resources in our local communities. In the case of our CPR Program and with effective funding, we believe we can restore the most at risk acres of the three Pilot Forests over the next ten years.

Do you have reservations about Charter/Pilot Forests: We have no reservations about evaluating differing Charter/Pilot Forest Concepts. The effort is permitting renewed debate on how best to incorporate local communities in public land management direction. We feel this debate is important to the future of public land resources. Concepts that are not effective or acceptable will be revised or rejected by stakeholders. However, effective models will prove to be very beneficial to society.

DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENT

**Required by House Rule XI, clause 2(g)
And Rules of the Committee on Resources**

Part A

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4. **Organization you are representing:** National Forest County Partnership Program
5. **Related education & training to forest restoration management:** PhD in Forest Economics and Management
6. **Related professional license or affiliations:** None
7. **Work experience related to forest restoration management:**
20 years research on forest ecosystem restoration in Southwest US.
11 years as Dean and Professor of Forest Ecosystem Management, Northern Arizona University.
Forest restoration assessment on four National Forests in Arizona and New Mexico.
8. **Position held in program being represented:** Executive Director of National Forest County Partnership Restoration Program.

Part B

1. **USDA Forest Service Related Contracts:**
1998-2002: \$85,000 contract to Navajo County, Arizona to develop Blue Ridge Restoration Monitoring Plan. Project partially

funded by Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, Arizona.

2. **Other related information:** Dr. Lawrence Garrett has dedicated the past 20 years to development of scientific understanding of forest change and most effective methods of forest restoration.