

Chairman Rob Bishop
Opening Statement
Full Committee Markup
July 25, 2017

Today's markup will be featuring 21 bills—the majority of which have bipartisan support--covering a wide spectrum of issues over the Committee's jurisdiction regarding use of federal lands, energy, mineral and water resources, tribal and species management. I will mention several of them.

First, H.R. 3281, sponsored by Congressman Lamborn, seeks to modernize the Bureau of Reclamation's title transfer process to empower water and power users and give them more control of their operations. Prior Administrations- both Democrat and Republican- have expressed a desire to facilitate more of these conveyances, but there have been only 30 title transfers in the last 20 years. While title transfer may not be appropriate for every local water user organization, there needs to be a better process for those that desire to take ownership of the facilities they pay for without having to navigate through unnecessary red tape and delays. This bill would remedy that.

Another bill we will consider, H.R.2371, sponsored by Congressman Gosar, is a bipartisan bill requiring the Western Area Power Administration to establish a pilot program to provide a detailed accounting of how it uses taxpayer and ratepayer funds. It makes perfect sense that those who pay the bills should know where their money is going. Mr. Gosar's bill is an important to step toward ensuring this goal.

H.R. 3115 introduced by Congressman Nolan is a bipartisan bill with broad local support that ratifies the objectives of the NorthMet Land Exchange final Record of Decision, resolves management challenges in the Superior National Forest and promotes local economic development.

H.R. 2423, which was introduced by Congressman Stewart, reflects compromises local Utah officials negotiated in goodfaith with the BLM 8 years ago to create a 4-mile transportation corridor in the Red Cliffs National Conservation Area in Southern Utah. This corridor is extremely important to the City of St. George, one of the fastest growing areas in the nation. Rapid growth has put a strain on their existing transportation infrastructure, and the corridor facilitated by this bill balances the needs of St. George while minimizing impacts to desert tortoise habitat.

H.R. 2582, introduced by Representative Love, provides a common-sense resolution to a long-standing conflict between the State of Utah and the BLM over statehood-era land grants. The bill will promote responsible land management and enable the United States to fulfil its commitments to provide land for the support of Utah's higher education. For nearly 20 years, the BLM has cited an administrative technicality valuing land exchanges over state selections to hold up the State of Utah's selection of roughly 500 acres of BLM land that has been classified for disposal—land that would otherwise benefit Utah State University. This bill would put state selections on equal footing with land exchanges and reaffirm that the BLM may process the state's current selection, as well as future state selections, in the immediate area without further land use planning.

H.R. 2075, sponsored by Congressman Walden adjusts the eastern boundary of a BLM Wilderness Study Area to facilitate fire prevention and response activities to protect adjacent private property at high risk of catastrophic wildfire in Jefferson County, Oregon. While the land will remain federally owned, reducing the size of the WSA will allow the local community to work with BLM to implement practical management to ensure local firefighters can protect the community in the event of fire.

Finally, H.R. 2083, a bipartisan bill sponsored by Mrs. Herrera Beutler, updates federal law to provide a temporary, expedited process to give Northwest states and tribes the ability to address sea lion predation of endangered salmon on a limited basis.

There are many other good bipartisan bills not mentioned that the Committee will discuss today and I appreciate the work of my colleagues for their help in advancing them.