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John Martin
County Commissioner
Garfield County, Colorado
Testimony: HR 818, Bark beetle epidemic, drought, deteriorating forest conditions
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forest and Public Lands

1. Good day, Chairman and members of the Committee.
2. My name is John Martin.

I am a County Commissioner from Garfield County, Colorado, an area of 2900 square miles in western Colorado.

I have been a Commissioner for 17 years.

I have served as the Chairman of our three member board for 15 years.

I also serve as Chair of the Colorado Counties Public Lands Legislative committee.

In 2012, I was elected as First Vice-Chair of the Western Interstate Region, a division of the National Association of Counties, which serves 14 Western States.

In my attempt to earn an income, I am an everyday farmer, growing peaches, apricots and apples in western Colorado.

I would like to also point out that before life in politics, I was a police officer for nearly 25 years in Glenwood Springs, the County seat of Garfield County.

3. I am here to speak in support of HR 818 for the following reasons:

The Bill HR 818 “Healthy Forest Management and Wildfire Prevention Act”:

- Declares bark beetle epidemic, drought, deteriorating forest health and high risk wildfires as imminent threats.
- Allows The Governor of a State to designate high risk areas within National Forests and Public Lands within their State.
- Allows designation of high risk areas by Federal agencies within National Forests and Public Lands.
- Promotes good neighbor cooperation between Federal, Indian and State Governments.
- Allows the use of emergency hazardous fuels reduction projects in high risk areas.
- Supports the request by NACO to extend the Stewardship contracts from ten years to twenty.
- The bill uses common sense and encourages Federal Agencies to work with Indian, State and County governments but most of all, business, which is truly the key to success.

4. The Bill supports a needed and new emerging forest restoration industry by supplying economic certainty so tools, manpower, and financial support can provide reduction of wildfire risks, reduction of hazardous fuels within our forest and public lands which provide safer area around our communities.

5. In closing, I offer the following views:

- Federal land managers know the highest risk areas around us; This Bill gives them another tool in working with local communities to address those risks.
- Educating the Public on defensible space continues to be a top priority and should not be overlooked. In Colorado, citizens can be reimbursed by the State 50% of costs for improvements to defensible space.
- The local use doctrine regarding public land is extremely important to us. Nearly 70% of the lands in Garfield County are managed by Federal agencies. Forest management practices are a crucial part of the picture.
- The vitality and strength of the Western United States is closely tied to the health of our public lands.
- Key questions when considering legislation, rule or regulation used by Garfield County (REAL).

Responsive:

Is it required by state or federal law?

Was comprehensive data used to define the problem and desired outcome?

Were experts who administer the affected program engaged?

Efficient:

Will it streamline or add layers of bureaucracy?

Is it redundant or inefficient?

Are current staffing levels sufficient to comply with additional requirements?

Accountable:

Are there measurable outcomes to be achieved by this change?

Is there adequate funding to pay for all direct costs?

Are there models in existence that may provide better outcomes?

Local-State-Federal partnerships:

Have local elected officials been consulted?

Has there been collaboration between agencies?

Does it limit flexibility to be responsive to community needs?

- This bill answers those above questions so, The Garfield County Board of Commissioners supports this Bill to better the health of our Forests and Public Lands and address wildfire risk in and around our communities and promote a needed forest restoration industry.

Thank you.