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**Opening Statement: Chairman Calvert**

**FY 2015 Budget Hearing**

**Bureau of Land Management**

April 4, 2014 (9:30am)

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The Committee will come to order.

Good morning and welcome to the Subcommittee's hearing on the President's FY15 budget for the Bureau of Land Management. I'm pleased to welcome Neil Kornze, Principal Deputy Director and the president's nominee for the next Director.

The President's FY15 budget proposal for the BLM is roughly \$1.06 billion in discretionary appropriations, which is \$13.5 million or 1.3 percent below the FY14 enacted level. The most notable changes to the budget agreed upon for FY14 include the following, in my opinion.

The proposal includes a \$4 million cut to the rangeland management program and new fees to shift a portion of the grazing permit administration costs to ranchers—same as last year. The large backlog of grazing permit applications has been a concern of this Subcommittee for some time now, as have fair costs to the taxpayer. While I'm willing to engage in a discussion of what is fair, I fail to see how this proposal will improve the backlog situation and speed up the

permitting process. Most successful proposals offer win-win solutions, which this one still does not appear to be.

The budget proposes a nearly \$3 million increase for the feral horse and burrow program to implement reforms recommended by the National Academy of Sciences. There is little disagreement that current policy is unsustainable. While I whole-heartedly agree with the National Academy's finding that population estimates must be more scientifically sound, I am skeptical that a chemical sterilization solution can be found that is environmentally safe and more cost-effective than a spaying and neutering policy like we have for feral pets.

The budget proposes \$15 million for the greater sage-grouse initiative. The BLM manages the most sage-grouse habitat in the nation, so if the Fish and Wildlife Service decides to list the species, the question every western State will be asking is whether BLM did enough to prevent a listing. I don't want to find out two years from now that the BLM could have done more if they had the resources. So I am keenly interested in putting forth the most aggressive and responsive cross-cutting budget for sage-grouse conservation as possible for FY15.

While some are predicting the consequences of a sage-grouse listing to be far worse than those of the spotted owl, there is little disagreement that a sage-grouse listing will have profound negative impacts on America's ability to be energy-independent. Energy

independence is a goal that many of us share, along with an all-of-the-above strategy in order to get there and to stay there. We *all* get that renewable energy is the only long-term, sustainable energy solution, but we disagree on the length of the term and its consequences.

The BLM's FY15 energy and minerals budget proposes to stimulate renewable energy production while ensuring that existing non-renewable energy production is clean and accountable. Naturally this Subcommittee will continue to support both efforts, as it did for FY14. What concerns me though is a proposal to shift \$38 million in costs to non-renewable energy producers, while doing nothing to reduce permitting delays and to stimulate production. As with grazing fees, for the third straight year, this doesn't appear to be a win-win proposal.

Last but not least are proposals to establish a public lands foundation, and to improve maps of BLM lands. I support both efforts in concept, and I look forward to working with you in the days ahead on these and other details of BLM's FY15 budget.