

June 14, 2023

The Honorable John Curtis
U.S. House of Representatives
2323 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Curtis:

The American Farm Bureau Federation and state Farm Bureaus in the West appreciate the introduction of H.R. 3397, and we support your legislation. AFBF is the nation's largest general farm organization, with almost six million farm and ranch members in all fifty states and Puerto Rico. Our collective Farm Bureaus are farm and ranch families working together to build a sustainable future of safe and abundant food, fiber and renewable fuel for our nation and the world.

As you know, the American West is truly unique—not only in the landscape but in how ranchers serve as caretakers of our shared public lands. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is now proposing significant changes to how public lands are managed, including creating a new “use” under the definition of “multiple use,” establishing a new kind of land lease for conservation, and elevating and promoting additional and likely restrictive land use designations, in addition to codifying mitigation requirements. We agree with the goal of your legislation, which would require BLM to withdraw the proposal.

Ranchers are delivering a return on the trust placed in them to care for public lands. They are clearing debris, spotting wildfire risks, and reporting other potential dangers to local law enforcement. Livestock grazing also brings overall health benefits to the land, from reducing wildfire risk and slowing the spread of invasive weeds to building robust root systems and spurring forage growth for native species. The University of Wyoming Extension analyzed the most recent USDA census numbers and found that for each pound of beef raised on public lands, Americans get \$0.44 in ecosystem-related returns.

In addition to policy concerns over the proposal, we are disappointed in the way the proposed rule was developed. Our public lands ranchers partner with the BLM to fulfill the mission of landscape management. However, this proposal was released without stakeholder discussion or advance notice. Recently held public information meetings left our attendees with more questions than answers. We have encouraged BLM to withdraw the proposal, or at least extend the comment period for this extensive new land management plan.

Thank you for your support of America's public lands ranchers and the rural communities they live in.

Sincerely,

