

- As the Chair noted, today this subcommittee meets to review the FY2020 budget requests of the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service.
- Collectively these two land management agencies manage roughly 20 percent of the land in our nation.
- That percentage is considerably higher for those of us in western states.
- In my home state of Utah alone, the BLM and Forest Service manage over 30 million acres, which amounts to roughly 57 percent of the state.
- In my district, some counties are over 90% public land. As a former Mayor, it is hard to imagine only having control of 10% of my city, but these rural counties work hard to combat the unique problems facing their communities.
- I highlight these numbers to emphasize the magnitude of the influence these agencies yield. The decisions made by these agencies have very real impacts on our environment, our economy, and on our communities.
- I welcome the opportunity to examine and discuss the priorities put forth in the President's 2020 Budget request.
- While the budget process provides valuable insights into the priorities of the Administration, it is Congress' job to make spending decisions.

- An important part of the Natural Resource Committee's oversight responsibility, and of this budget oversight hearing, is to review problem areas and make tough decisions.
- I believe this request presents a number of excellent opportunities for bipartisan cooperation.
- One prime example of a bipartisan opportunity is the joint emphasis from the BLM and the Forest Service to meaningfully address the ongoing wildfire crisis impacting our nations forests and rangeland.
- In coordination with this budget request, the BLM and Forest Service have collaborated on a proposed package of commonsense reforms to reduce catastrophic fire risk and improve forest and rangeland health.
- These fires are a national emergency that we need to take seriously. Just last year, wildfires in the United States destroyed over 8.5 million acres of land and wreaked lethal havoc on several communities throughout the west.
- In Utah alone, over 485,000 acres were destroyed, disrupting the livelihoods of many communities in my district.
- Sadly, last year was not an outlier, as we have continuously seen this type of destruction year after year.
- I support the collaborative and agency specific priorities put forth in this budget proposal to improve forest and rangeland management.
- It is vital that we proactively manage our forests and rangelands, and I look forward to hearing about the ways our land management

agencies intend to use their existing authorities to achieve these goals, as well as some of the additional tools that they believe are necessary.

- I also commend the commitment both have shown in this budget to managing the lands currently within the federal estate as well as the continuing push to address the growing maintenance backlog plaguing our federal land management agencies.
- Republicans on this committee are ready to work on these areas of shared concern.
- I'd now like to yield some time to my friend from Arkansas, Mr. Westerman. He has been a great leader on many federal lands issues, and especially on forestry and wildfire prevention. He regrettably has a committee conflict that is preventing him from being here the whole time, but I wanted to give him the opportunity to offer some of his thoughts on these budget requests. Mr. Westerman: