

Opening Statement for Ranking Member Russ Fulcher
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 268, H.R. 980, H.R. 1469, H.R. 2512, H.R.
2551, H.R. 3600, H.R. 4358, H.R. 4404, H.R. 4494, and H.R. 5118

November 9, 2021

Thank you, Chair DeGette. Today the Subcommittee meets to discuss ten federal lands proposals primarily focused on recreation and conservation. I want to thank the Majority for including four Republican proposals, two that will establish new National Historic Trails, one that will facilitate land exchanges to complete a popular existing recreational trail, and one that will establish a wild and scenic river in Florida.

The remaining bills are mostly non-controversial locally supported public lands bills. Regrettably, there is a clear outlier in H.R. 980, which is a deeply partisan proposal that seeks to lock up lands in rural Oregon under a permanent mineral withdrawal. This bill has generated significant opposition from

local elected officials. We will hear from one of those officials, County Commissioner Daniel DeYoung from Josephine County. Coming from Idaho, where over sixty percent of our land is owned by the federal government, I have experienced firsthand how important local collaboration and input is for public lands decisions. The management of these lands have real impacts for communities on the ground who live with the consequences. This bill unfortunately is part of a broader effort that has been pushed by extreme environmental groups that have ignored local voices in their efforts to lock up lands. Rural counties in Southwestern Oregon and Northern California have consistently lost vital jobs, revenue, and access as responsible timber harvesting has been curtailed, land has been locked up under Antiquities Act overreach, and other preservationist designations have been overlaid. These radical policies ignore

the plight of local communities in favor of the desires of limousine liberals that live far from the affected lands.

Fortunately, the remainder of the bills before us today appear to reflect the type of local support and buy-in necessary to achieve lasting public lands agreements. H.R. 2551, the Bonneville Shoreline Trail Advancement Act, sponsored by Representative Curtis, is a perfect example of a bill that balances the interests from a myriad of concerned stakeholders to reach a compromise we can all can be proud of. The bill facilitates the completion of the locally driven Bonneville Shoreline Trail in Utah by swapping out roughly 326 acres of wilderness. This compromise will greatly improve recreational opportunities, while also providing a more appropriate conservation strategy for the area.

There are two other Republican trail bills on today's hearing, a bill to establish Route 66 as a National Historic Trail, sponsored by Representative LaHood, and a bill to establish the Chisholm and Western Historic Trails, sponsored by Representative Estes. These proposed trails, which have been studied by the National Park Service, highlight two historically significant passages across our great nation. Route 66, America's most well-known road extends from the Windy City all the way to sunny Santa Monica. Route 66 played a major role during the Dustbowl and during World War II. The Chisholm Trail and Western Trails were primarily used by Texas ranchers and contractors to move cattle from Texas to midwestern and Great Plains states from the 1850s through the 1880s. Both bills have significant support and been thoughtfully crafted.

I want to thank all the witnesses for being with us and I look forward to hearing the testimony and discussing these important issues with you. With that, Madam Chair, I yield back.